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Wars of Position

Language Policy, Counter-Hegemonies and Cultural Cleavages in
Italy and Norway

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due acknowledgement has been made in the text. It has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification except as specified.

Guy Puzey

31 January 2011

Abstract

This thesis investigates the development of the present-day linguistic hegemonies within Italy and Norway as products of ongoing linguistic 'wars of position'. Language activist movements have been key actors in these struggles, and this study seeks to address how such movements have operated in attempts to translate their linguistic ideologies into de facto language policy through mechanisms such as political agitation, propaganda and the use of language in public spaces. It also reveals which other extra-linguistic values and ideologies have become associated with or allied to these linguistic causes in recent years, how these ideologies have affected language policy, and whether such ideological alliances have been representative of language users' ideologies.

The study is informed by an innovative methodological framework combining the theories and metaphors of Antonio Gramsci (including hegemony and wars of position as well as his linguistic writings) with the theories of Stein Rokkan on cultural-political cleavage structures and the relationships between centres and peripheries. These constructs and relationships are thereafter documented as ideologically defining strands running through the history of the movements studied, through reference to activist periodicals and party newspapers.

In Italy, the focus of the research is on the Lega Nord (Northern League), a far-right populist autonomist political movement. The Lega has sought to legitimise its imagination of a northern nation ('Padania') by portraying the dialects of northern Italy as minority languages, emphasising the hegemonic relationship between the Italian national language and northern dialects. The movement has also used this perception of

northern dialects as peripheral and suppressed by Italian to bolster its depiction of 'Padania' as a wealthy periphery allegedly held back by central and southern Italy. Although this campaign has achieved some successes in increased visibility of dialects in public spaces, dialects largely remain restricted to 'low'-status domains.

In Norway, the thesis devotes special attention to the post-war efforts of the counter-hegemonic campaign for the Nynorsk standard of Norwegian, which was devised as a common denominator for Norwegian dialects, as opposed to the hegemonic standard Bokmål, which is a Norwegianisation of written Danish. In opposing the challenges of globalisation and centralisation, the Nynorsk movement has retained a radical character and is generally associated with a left-wing variant of nationalism, a key part of the Norwegian cultural cleavage structure. The social argumentation of the Nynorsk movement was instrumental in its successful promotion of dialects, now seen as an unstigmatised means of spoken communication in all social contexts.

Dedication

To Dr Ben Pickard, my Big Brother, for keeping me under his watchful eye since 1984.

To my mother Tabby Angier, for always encouraging adventures.

To my beloved Marzia, for our first decade together.

2.3.1 Centres and peripheries	-	-	-	-	-	-	58
2.3.2 Cultural cleavage structures	-	-	-	-	-	-	63
2.4 Combining Gramscian and Rokkanian approaches in linguistics	-						66
3 The Development of the Italian Language Question	-	-	-	-			77
3.1 Dante's <i>vulgare illustre</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	77
3.2 The four proposals of the sixteenth century	-	-	-	-			80
3.3 Purism and anti-purism	-	-	-	-	-	-	83
3.4 The language question at Unification: Manzoni and Ascoli	-	-					86
3.5 Gramsci and the language question	-	-	-	-	-		93
3.5.1 Gramsci's linguistic grounding	-	-	-	-	-		94
3.5.2 The critique of Esperanto and Manzonian language planning							99
3.5.3 An alternative solution to the language question	-	-					101
3.6 Fascism and language	-	-	-	-	-	-	103
3.7 The dawn of the Republic	-	-	-	-	-	-	107
4 Linguistic Wars of Position in Modern-Day Italy	-	-	-	-	-		112
4.1 'New Language Questions'	-	-	-	-	-	-	112
4.2 The continuum of varieties of Italian, and new dialectal domains	-						115
4.3 Linguistic minorities in Italy, and dialects as minority languages	-						118
4.4 The Lega Nord	-	-	-	-	-	-	127
4.4.1 Autonomist antecedents	-	-	-	-	-	-	137
4.4.2 The role of dialects in the formation of the Lega	-	-					142
4.4.3 Dialects from the first speeches to temporary abandonment							146
4.4.4 Printed propaganda: Posters and cartoons	-	-	-				158

4.4.5 Place-names and the linguistic landscape	-	-	-	167
4.4.6 Dialects in education	-	-	-	178
4.4.7 A return to the dialect cause?	-	-	-	182
 5 The Development of the Norwegian Language Question	-	-	-	 194
5.1 A language struggle between the national and the social	-	-		194
5.2 The rise of a Danish linguistic hegemony	-	-	-	195
5.3 Union with Sweden and National Romanticism	-	-	-	201
5.4 Ivar Aasen's counter-hegemonic project	-	-	-	204
5.5 Riksmål: Towards a new minimal hegemony?	-	-	-	209
5.6 The rise of Norwegian language activism	-	-	-	212
5.7 Official recognition of Landsmål	-	-	-	217
5.8 Language policy in post-1905 Norway	-	-	-	221
5.9 1917-1940: Towards a Samnorsk norm	-	-	-	226
5.10 1940-1945: Language activism under occupation	-	-	-	232
 6 Linguistic Wars of Position in Modern-Day Norway	-	-	-	 240
6.1 The move towards national consolidation	-	-	-	240
6.2 Post-war urbanisation and centralisation	-	-	-	241
6.3 The language struggle heats up	-	-	-	244
6.4 The Vogt committee and 'language peace'	-	-	-	246
6.5 1972: The Nynorsk movement and the EEC referendum	-	-		249
6.6 Stalin and the Norwegian language struggle	-	-	-	254
6.7 Norsk Målungdom and the 'dialect wave'	-	-	-	259
6.8 1994: The EU referendum and Lillehammer	-	-	-	266

6.9 The language question resolved or an eternal struggle?	-	-	273
6.10 Recent trends in language discrimination	-	-	280
6.11 The campaign for the Norwegianisation of place-names	-	-	285
6.12 Evidence from the linguistic landscape	-	-	291
 7 Conclusion	-	-	 305
7.1 Wars of position in language policy	-	-	305
7.2 Counter-hegemonic language activism compared	-	-	307
7.3 Extra-linguistic ideologies and cultural cleavages	-	-	310
7.4 Counter-hegemony and linguistic democracy	-	-	312
7.5 Organic language policy and respect for the peripheries	-	-	315
 Bibliography	-	-	 318

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List of Abbreviations

AIDLCM	Association internationale des langues et cultures menacées – International Association of Threatened Languages and Cultures
AKP (m-l)	Arbeidernes Kommunistparti (marxist-leninistene) (in modern Bokmål) / Arbeidaranes Kommunistparti (marxist-leninistane) (in modern Nynorsk) – the Workers’ Communist Party (Marxist-Leninists)
ALP	Associassion Liber Piemònt – Free Piedmont Association
AN	Alleanza Nazionale – National Alliance
AS	<i>Aksjeselskap</i> – limited company
ASA	<i>Allmennaksjeselskap</i> – public limited company
CE	Common Era
DC	Democrazia Cristiana – Christian Democrats
EC	European Community / European Communities
ECRML	European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages
EEA	European Economic Area
EEC	European Economic Community
EU	European Union
FdV	Federazione dei Verdi – Federation of the Greens
FrP	Fremskrittspartiet (in Bokmål) / Framstegspartiet (in Nynorsk) – Progress Party
IdV	Italia dei Valori – Italy of Values
LOOC	Lillehammer Olympic Organising Committee
MARP	Movimento per l’autonomia regionale piemontese – Movement for Piedmontese Regional Autonomy / Movimento Autonomista Regionale Padano – Padanian Regional Autonomist Movement
MGP	Movimento Giovani Padani – Young Padanians Movement
MSI	Movimento Sociale Italiano – Italian Social Movement
NRK	Norsk rikskringkasting – Norwegian State Broadcasting
NS	Nasjonal Samling – National Unification
OL	<i>Olympiske leker</i> – Olympic Games
PCI	Partito Comunista Italiano – Italian Communist Party
PdCI	Partito dei Comunisti Italiani – Party of Italian Communists
PRC	Partito della Rifondazione Comunista – Communist Refoundation Party

PRI	Partito Repubblicano Italiano – Italian Republican Party
PSI	Partito Socialista Italiano – Italian Socialist Party
RAI	Radiotelevisione Italiana – Italian [State] Radio and Television
SV	Sosialistisk Venstreparti – Socialist Left Party; formerly Sosialistisk Valgforbund (in Bokmål) / Sosialistisk Valgforbund (in Nynorsk) – Socialist Electoral League
UK	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
US	United States of America
UTET	Unione Tipografico-Editrice Torinese – Turin Typography-Publishing Union

Notes

Part of the material on the Lega Nord's dialect campaign and perceptions of nationhood is based upon my dissertation for the degree of MSc by Research at the University of Edinburgh, submitted in 2007, 'Planning the Linguistic Landscape: A Comparative Survey of the Use of Minority Languages in the Road Signage of Norway, Scotland and Italy'. Some other material in this thesis has been published or is currently due for publication, in a different format, in the following conference proceedings and book chapters:

Guy Puzey, 'Opportunity or Threat? The Role of Minority Toponyms in the Linguistic Landscape', in *Names in Multi-Lingual, Multi-Cultural and Multi-Ethnic Contact: Proceedings of the 23rd International Congress of Onomastic Sciences*, ed. by Wolfgang Ahrens, Sheila Embleton and André Lapierre (Toronto: York University, 2009), pp. 821-827.

Guy Puzey, 'Lotte per l'egemonia: Un approccio comparativo alla politica linguistica in Norvegia e in Italia' [Struggling for hegemony: A comparative approach to the politics of language in Norway and in Italy], in *L'uso della storia nelle letterature nordiche. Le lingue nordiche fra storia e attualità*, ed. by Massimo Ciaravolo and Andrea Meregalli (Milan: Cisalpino, 2011), pp. 405-425.

Guy Puzey, 'Signscapes and Minority Languages: Language Conflict on the Street', in *Word on the Street: Reading, Writing & Inhabiting Public Space*, ed. by Elisha Foust and Sophie Fuggle (London: Institute of Germanic & Romance Studies, in press).

Guy Puzey, 'Two-Way Traffic: How Linguistic Landscapes Reflect and Influence the Politics of Language', in *Minority Languages in the Linguistic Landscape*, ed. by Durk Gorter, Heiko F. Marten and Luk Van Mensel (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, in press).

Unless otherwise stated, the translations of quotations in languages other than English are my own. Such translations appear in parentheses in the case of short quotations, and immediately following the text of indented quotations.

The names of institutions, organisations and political parties are generally given in the original language in normal type. Norwegian words are spelt in Nynorsk, unless there is a

special reason to do otherwise, such as in direct quotations or with reference to a term that is specifically related to Bokmål. Words transcribed from non-Roman alphabets are transcribed according to normal practice in English, although they may appear differently in directly quoted text.

If an accepted English exonymic form of a place-name exists, for example Florence, this will normally be used in the text. If there is no commonly accepted English name, the place will be named according to the official languages, e.g. Trentino-Alto Adige (Italian) and Trentino-Südtirol will be Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtirol, unless referring specifically to either Trentino or Südtirol.

The numbering and dating system of the Lega Lombarda's newspaper *Lombardia Autonomista* changed several times during the years it was published, as did the frequency of publication. Unless a full date was used on the publication itself, the volume number (where applicable) and/or the issue number will be given in addition to the month of publication.

The alphabetical order followed in the bibliography conforms to the Norwegian alphabet, in which *Æ*, *Ø* and *Å/Aa* follow *Z*.

1 Introduction and Key Concepts

1.1 Comparing Italy and Norway

Italy and Norway are two state nations that have seen particularly intense language planning debates. In the early nineteenth century, the written language of Norway was Danish, but by the time of Norwegian independence in 1905 there were not only one, but two national written standards of Norwegian. The *questione della lingua* (language question) has been an important topic for Italian cultural commentators since the times of Dante, and in the nineteenth century a form of literary Tuscan was chosen to be the basis of standard Italian in the newly unified state. Despite the historic vitality of a rich variety of dialects in both Italy and Norway, the prestige of most Italian dialects has been in steady decline since political unification, while dialects of Norwegian are used extensively at a national level. This thesis will aim to show that the influence of politics and ideologies has been a highly significant factor in the development of the present linguistic hierarchies, just as it was central in the solutions proposed and adopted for language planning and standardisation at the historical junctures when Italy and Norway were founded as modern states.

The exceptionally widespread use of dialects in Norway could partly be explained by the fact that they allow for greater mutual comprehension than the many disparate regional vernaculars of Italy, just as the Scandinavian languages as a group allow for a high level of intercommunication. This facilitates the use of dialects when speaking with strangers or with people from other parts of Norway, or indeed other parts of Scandinavia. The difference between the ways in which dialects are used in the two countries is so striking, however, that there appear to be other factors at play. The term 'diglossia' is used to describe

situations in which two linguistic varieties are used, one 'high' and one 'low'.¹ In Ferguson's original work, 'diglossia' was only intended to represent situations in which standard (primarily written) and vernacular (primarily spoken) varieties of the same language coexist, but the model has since been expanded, notably by Fishman,² to include situations of societal bilingualism where any two separate languages or dialects perform different functions and have distinct prestige values (see also 1.4 below). The 'high' variety is often a standardised national language used in official circumstances or in prestigious cultural production and that is generally acquired through institutional education. Regional dialects in most European contexts could be described as 'low' varieties, learned at a young age within the home and used in the family environment, with friends or in other near-horizon contexts such as folk literature.

In Italy, the national standard written language, originally based on Florentine, has provided a basis for the 'high' spoken standard. Some dialects or regional languages do still enjoy relatively high prestige in their own territory or in specific domains. Venetian, for example, can occasionally be heard in university lectures in Venice, and Neapolitan is a respected language of the theatre. Others, such as Sardinian, have been specifically recognised at a national level in legislation on regional and minority languages, which has allowed them to strengthen their status. Overall, though, there is a clear societal differentiation between dialects or regional languages as 'low' varieties and Italian as a 'high' variety, especially at the national level of discourse.

The prestige value of dialects in Italy is generally low in spite of the still relatively high number of dialect speakers. The most recent national statistics, referring to 2006 and

¹ Charles A. Ferguson, 'Diglossia', *Word*, 15 (1959), 325-40.

² Joshua A. Fishman, 'Bilingualism with and without Diglossia; Diglossia with and without Bilingualism', *Journal of Social Issues*, 32 (1967), 29-38.

based on a sample of 24,000 families, show that when speaking with other family members, 48.5% of people aged over six years in Italy use dialects, either exclusively (16.0%) or in alternation with Italian (32.5%), while 45.5% use only or mainly Italian, with the remainder speaking other languages. The figures are not vastly different for interactions with friends, although Italian does gain slightly over dialects. There is, however, a major difference when talking with strangers is taken into account: in such circumstances, 72.8% report speaking only or mainly Italian, while 24.4% speak dialect, or dialect as well as Italian. Only 5.4% of the population sample report speaking only or mainly dialect with strangers.³ Perhaps this latter group could be considered the 'core' of dialect speakers. They may spend practically all of their time actively speaking dialect, but this does not necessarily mean that they have no competence in standard Italian, as almost all of them will have been exposed to the standard language at least at school and in the media.

Although the two official standards of Norwegian, Bokmål and Nynorsk, both allow for a comparatively high degree of flexibility in word choice and grammar, there is no recognised standard for the spoken language. Nevertheless, some middle-class urban sociolects, especially those of Oslo, have been accorded a certain degree of prestige. It is, for example, the spoken variety known as *standardøstnorsk* in Bokmål or *standardaustnorsk* in Nynorsk ('standard eastern Norwegian') that provides the default pronunciation generally taught to learners of Norwegian outside of Norway. This form of spoken language features, for example, phonology typical of south-eastern Norwegian, but morphology, syntax and

³ Istituto nazionale di statistica, 'La lingua italiana, i dialetti e le lingue straniere: Anno 2006', *Statistiche in breve: Famiglia e società*, 20 April 2007 <http://www.istat.it/salastampa/comunicati/non_calendario/20070420_00/testointegrale.pdf> [accessed 10 January 2011] (table 1).

vocabulary from a moderate variant of written Bokmål.⁴ In spite of this element of particular prestige associated with certain varieties, all other regional spoken varieties are also currently used in Norway in an assortment of national domains that is wide-ranging to the extreme. Norwegian dialects are the norm in many spheres that are usually reserved in other countries for a 'high' variety, for example on television, in the Storting, and in university lectures, in general contrast to Italy.

Native speakers of Norwegian outperform speakers of Danish and Swedish in their understanding of other Scandinavian languages, and this has been explained by a number of factors. Firstly, there is a historical linguistic basis for this as the links between Danish and Norwegian lexis taken together with the similarities between the Norwegian and Swedish sound systems have placed Norwegian at a linguistic crossroads between Danish and Swedish. Secondly, levels of cultural contacts between the Scandinavian countries vary, and Norwegians appear to be the most enthusiastic consumers of their neighbouring Scandinavian cultures. Crucially for the present study, though, the sheer vitality of Norwegian dialects, and the exposure that this high level of linguistic variation gives Norwegians to speech patterns different to their own, as well as the existence of the two official written standards, also go some way to explaining Norwegian speakers' greater comprehension of the other mainland Scandinavian languages.⁵

In recent times, in both Italy and Norway, various groups have attempted to promote counter-cultural varieties of the national languages, suggesting that the Italian and

⁴ Reidunn Hernes, 'Talemål i endring? Ein longitudinell studie av talemålsutvikling og språkleg røyndomsoppfatning hjå ungdomar i Os' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Bergen, 2006), p. 41.

⁵ Lars-Olof Delsing and Katarina Lundin Åkesson, *Håller språket ihop Norden? En forskningsrapport om ungdomars förståelse av danska, svenska och norska* (Copenhagen: Nordiska kulturfonden, 2005), pp. 136-137.

Norwegian language questions are far from resolved. This continued promotion of alternative varieties will be examined in this thesis. Among the groups involved in promoting conflicting responses to the language questions are political parties, some with greatly differing ideological backgrounds.

Over the past two and a half decades, the Lega Nord (Northern League) has attempted to make the campaign for dialects in northern Italy its own. The Lega is well known for the negative attitudes shown by many of its members towards southern Italians and for its populist right-wing policies on, for example, immigration. Dialects have been used by the party in an attempt to legitimise the claims it makes regarding northern identity and to further the nation-building project it calls 'Padania'. In spite of the Lega's promotion of dialects, in cases where there have been positive changes in attitudes among the general public towards regional dialects, these appear to be unrelated to the Lega. The confirmation in recent statistical surveys of a healthy number of dialect speakers has led the sociolinguist Gaetano Berruto to move away from one possible scenario he had previously envisaged of the death of dialects – either between 2060 and 2085 according to a more dramatic projection or around 2350 following a more optimistic view – in favour of a view that the present situation of usage of both Italian and dialect will persist, with some overlapping of functions in everyday speech.⁶ Berruto points to the expansion of dialects into new domains, especially within the language of young people in online chats or forums, but also in comic books, word puzzle magazines and in the names and signs of small-scale commercial premises such as restaurants, bars or shops, and he suggests that such resurgences may be connected to reformed attitudes that no longer associate the use of dialects with a low standard of

⁶ Gaetano Berruto, 'Quale dialetto per l'Italia del Duemila? Aspetti dell'italianizzazione e risorgenze dialettali in Piemonte (e altrove)', in *Lingua e dialetto nell'Italia del Duemila*, ed. by Alberto A. Sobrero and Annarita Miglietta (Galatina: Congedo Editore, 2006), pp. 101-127.

education.⁷ However, these expanded domains still tend to see dialects used primarily for local purposes or to achieve particular effects of expression, not as widely accepted languages for communication with people from other regions as in Norway. In any case, the new domains and changed attitudes Berruto refers to seem mainly connected to generational differences and to technological innovations, not to the promotion by the Lega Nord.

In Norway, meanwhile, dialect activism and the campaign for dialect-based written standard languages has traditionally inspired political support predominantly, although not exclusively, from left-wing or radical parties, in opposition to reactionary support for Danish-based written standards. One extreme example is found in the Arbeidaranes Kommunistparti (marxist-leninistane) (Workers' Communist Party (Marxist-Leninists) – AKP (m-l)), which had a considerable profile in intellectual society in the 1970s. Its apparently left-wing tendencies could make it seem fundamentally opposite to a party such as the Lega Nord, but its reasons for supporting Nynorsk were, like the Lega's reasons for supporting dialects, mainly nationalist in nature, although AKP (m-l) justified its stance through a Stalinist approach to language (see 6.6 below). Against the 'national' line adopted by AKP (m-l) and others, a more 'social' line of argumentation was preferred by other language activists in the 1970s. This current was in favour of the more widespread use of dialects and was remarkably successful in changing attitudes in order to strengthen and maintain the practically across-the-board use of dialects that persists today.

1.2 Research questions, thesis aims and structure

This thesis will aim to address three primary areas of enquiry:

⁷ Ibid., pp. 118-119.

1. How have the present-day linguistic hegemonies within Italy and Norway developed as products of the ongoing linguistic 'wars of position' (see 2.2.2 below) in these countries? In particular, what has been the impact of the more recent developments in these struggles for hegemony in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries? In Italy, the focus will be on the national Italian language versus dialects, including the specific case of the political situation of northern dialects. In Norway, the attention will be concentrated on dialects, and on Bokmål versus Nynorsk.

2. How have activist movements mobilised to promote dialects or dialect-based standards (e.g Nynorsk) in Italy and Norway? The operations of such groups are a key part of the linguistic wars of position, affecting all the 'mechanisms' (see 1.6 below) at the interface between language ideologies and de facto language policy.

3. Where language has been a 'core value' (see 1.3 below), what other values or ideologies have been associated with or become allied to these linguistic causes in recent years? How have these ideologies affected language policy, and how representative or successful are these ideological alliances?

In addressing these questions, this study will attempt to add a new dimension to current sociolinguistic research into the interaction between politics and language. It will build on previous applications of hegemonic models, and the centre-periphery dichotomy, to the analysis of language in society. Consolidating such models, the thesis will attempt to address the shortcomings of other studies by examining internal linguistic conflicts in two countries and by extending the period analysed to the present day. Crucially, it will endeavour to demonstrate how it is possible for ideologically-opposed groups to apparently

have concordant attitudes towards linguistic issues, while otherwise ideologically-agreed groups can hold conflicting views on language matters.

Through its choice of subject matter, this thesis is intended to make a particular contribution to the field of European area studies, especially Italian and Scandinavian Studies – within which it is hoped to raise awareness of the potential for comparative linguistic and political studies focusing on the Nordic countries and Italy – but also to the burgeoning discipline of sociolinguistics.

Following this introduction and a brief discussion of the key sociolinguistic concepts, Chapter 2 of the thesis will seek to establish a theoretical and methodological basis for the investigation and comparison of the Italian and Norwegian situations. The comparative analysis of the two linguistic cultures will be enlightened, in particular, by the writings of the Italian Marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) and the work of the Norwegian social scientist Stein Rokkan (1921-1979). Chapter 3 will outline the historical development of the Italian language question before Chapter 4 turns the focus to the Lega Nord and its involvement in language policy. Historical responses to the Norwegian language question will be outlined in Chapter 5, and Chapter 6 will examine the developments since 1945, during which period dialects have secured their privileged status. Chapter 7 will conclude by bringing the two cases together once more to consolidate the theoretical model and answer the research questions posed here above.

1.3 Politics, ideology and linguistic cultures

If we understand politics in its broadest sense, as being concerned with the relative distribution of power, then human language is an inherently political phenomenon. When we communicate, we make decisions, judgments or choices based on the situation within which we are communicating and on our interlocutors or the audience with whom we are

dealing. This may require extremely nuanced changes to the way we communicate based on the power relationship between communicators. Such changes could include decisions based on register, whether or not to use in-group slang, jargon or colloquialisms, choices between the use of national or international standard forms or regionalisms, and in many languages the adoption of polite forms, including polite forms of pronouns and verbs, but also set terms of polite expression such as 'please'.

It has been put forward that perhaps the only circumstances that remove the potential for political interpretation of a form or utterance would be when these are produced 'in solitude or "inner speech"'.⁸ Although the best examples of political language will occur when language is perceived by others, even utterances made in solitude or within a person's mind can take on political dimensions. For instance, if a person speaks more than one language, and their thoughts are articulated in one of those languages, then a language choice has taken place, whether consciously or unconsciously.

If such choices can be made unconsciously and are even present in internalised language, does language actually fundamentally shape and condition thought? If so, this would have major implications for the links between language and ideology. A 'strong'⁹ variant of the '(Sapir-)Whorf(ian) Hypothesis'¹⁰ would contend that this is indeed the case. This hypothesis grew out of the works of Edward Sapir (1884-1939) and Benjamin Lee Whorf (1897-1941) after their deaths; neither of them actually elaborated their complex ideas in the form of a hypothesis.¹¹ The 'strong' variant of this hypothesis is also known as 'linguistic determinism', and implies that language does not only influence thought but actually

⁸ John E. Joseph, *Language and Politics* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), p. 19.

⁹ Ibid., p. 114.

¹⁰ Harold F. Schiffman, *Linguistic Culture and Language Policy* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 57.

¹¹ Joseph, *Language and Politics*, p. 134.

determines it. It is especially focused on the structure of language and may suggest, for example, that the presence or absence of given tenses in a language could condition a speaker's perception of time, or that colour vocabulary determines which colours speakers of a language actually perceive, so that 'innocent linguistic categories may take on the formidable appearance of cosmic absolutes'.¹² That such factors may have some effect on speakers' perceptions of the world, constraining them 'to certain modes of interpretation',¹³ is almost incontestable, but that they may absolutely prevent speakers from grasping some ideas found in other languages is more contentious. Thus, a 'weaker' variant of the hypothesis stresses the conditions over the constraints:

In the process of acquiring our mother tongue (or tongues) [...] we have transmitted to us the contents of our 'culture' along with it. The language is, in various ways, the primary *text* through which the culture is transmitted, and in the course of this early apprenticeship the knowledge involved becomes part not just of our memory but of our nervous system, our bodies, our *habitus*. It does not limit what we are able to think or do, but it does make it such that some things come more easily while others take an effort.¹⁴

The notion of *linguistic habitus* referred to here was elaborated by Bourdieu and consists of 'socially constructed dispositions' which, as well as building linguistic competences, also 'imply a certain propensity to speak and to say determinate things'.¹⁵ This less deterministic

¹² Edward Sapir, *Selected Writings of Edward Sapir in Language, Culture and Personality*, ed. by David G. Mandelbaum (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1949), p. 157.

¹³ Benjamin Lee Whorf, *Language, Thought, and Reality: Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf*, ed. by John B. Carroll (New York: Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Wiley, 1956), p. 214.

¹⁴ Joseph, *Language and Politics*, pp. 131-132.

¹⁵ Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, ed. by John B. Thompson, trans. by Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), p. 37.

approach to the Whorfian model also recognises that, while a certain link between language structure and thought, and hence ideology, does exist, there is more to it than this.

Language is indeed ideological, and political, more than merely in terms of structure or performance. Politics are an inherent part of our notion of what constitutes a language (see 1.4 below). Furthermore, by processes of symbolic extension, languages can come to represent the culture or cultures in which they are used. The use of English in, for example, shop advertising in Tokyo¹⁶ or in the lyrics of some non-Anglophone countries' entries to the Eurovision Song Contest often has more to do with the promotion of an external image or idea about the content produced than with the actual meaning of the advertisement or song lyrics. This image may suggest that the product advertised or the song being sung has an inherently positive value in terms of prestige and fashion, symbolised by the use of a language with a high international cachet. Significantly, in the case of English, this cachet that the language has may diverge from the international view of the cultures in which that language is native, and which may have initially given rise to that language's dominant status. In the late 1990s, there was an attempt to re-establish an image of 'Cool Britannia' – which had arguably existed in the 1960s – and reapply it to the United Kingdom as a state, using popular culture as an asset. This was abandoned as an official branding project as soon as 2001, when culture secretary Tessa Jowell claimed that such an image failed to address the complexity and multiplicity of the UK's culture.¹⁷

The global image of English shows that the *linguistic culture* that accompanies a language can be ideologically charged, and that it can be distinguished from the national

¹⁶ Peter Backhaus, *Linguistic Landscapes: A Comparative Study of Urban Multilingualism in Tokyo* (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 2007).

¹⁷ Louise Jury, 'Minister Declares Death of Cool Britannia Affair', *The Independent*, 23 November 2001, p. 12.

cultures of the countries from which the said language originates or where it is spoken as a native language. The term 'linguistic culture' is defined by Schiffman as 'the set of behaviours, assumptions, cultural forms, prejudices, folk belief systems, attitudes, stereotypes, ways of thinking about language, and religio-historical circumstances associated with a particular language'.¹⁸ Although Schiffman states that he does 'not give strong credence to the Whorfian hypothesis',¹⁹ his notion that these perceptions can be associated with a language could correspond with the cultural side of the minimal Whorfian approach outlined above. For Schiffman, studies of language policy (see 1.6 below) that ignore the broader background to the policy are 'probably futile, if not simply trivial'.²⁰ In this thesis, the cultural and historical backgrounds to current language policy in Italy and Norway will be appropriately explored, in order to give a fuller picture of how the present situations have developed.

Schiffman describes 'particular linguistic cultures' in which language represents what Smolicz calls a 'core value'.²¹ The examples Schiffman cites are Welsh linguistic culture and, following Smolicz, Italian speakers in Australia, Flemings in Belgium and the Québécois.²² Core values 'represent the heartland of the ideological system' and form 'the indispensable link between [a] group's cultural and social systems', without which these systems would disintegrate.²³ For many group cultures, significantly those linked with national origin (see 1.5 below), language is the glue that holds them together. It is first and foremost language

¹⁸ Schiffman, p. 5.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 8.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ J. J. Smolicz, *Culture and Education in a Plural Society* (Canberra: Curriculum Development Centre, 1979).

²² Schiffman, pp. 11-12.

²³ Jerzy Smolicz, 'Core Values and Cultural Identity', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 4 (1981), 75-90 (p. 75).

that may lead some people to speak of the 'Italian community' in Australia, or the 'Polish community' in Scotland. A distinct language is not an essential core value for all cultures, however. Religion, for example, can be a core cultural value for those who identify themselves as Irish in countries such as Australia and the United States.²⁴ Indeed, language varieties also represent core, identifying values for the linguistic sub-cultures to be examined in detail here, advocating the use of dialects or dialect-based standards in Italy and Norway. In these cases, such core values define what Stein Rokkan called 'cultural cleavages' (see 2.3.1 below).

In order to begin to discover how the boundaries of linguistic cultures can be defined, in the following sections it will be necessary first to consider the nature of the distinction between 'language' and 'dialect', then to see how nationalism has become entwined in this distinction. This introductory chapter will then conclude by exploring how language policy and language activism can operate as vehicles of language ideologies or with an aim to change language ideologies.

1.4 Language and dialect (and dialectic)

One of the most political aspects of language lies in the very definition of what constitutes a language and what constitutes a dialect. The word *dialect* is derived from the Ancient Greek *διάλεκτος*, which originally signified 'conversation' before coming to refer to 'the language of a given people'. When this word was adopted in Latin, it was used to mean a local language used for literary production.²⁵ The localised geographical sense incorporated in the Latin understanding of the term continues in its main modern sense. The distinction

²⁴ Ibid., p. 80.

²⁵ Carla Marcato, *Dialetto, dialetti e italiano* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2002), p. 13.

between dialect and language is, however, not merely one of geographical delimitation, but is most crucially based on a perception of dialects as subordinate to languages.²⁶ Raymond Williams shows that this implication of the lower authority of a 'dialect' relative to a 'language' has not always been the case in English usage, with a source from 1635 clearly concentrating on geographical distinctions by citing Russian and Polish as dialects of a Slavonic language.²⁷ Since assigning the labels of 'language' or 'dialect' implies an inherent classification of one variety as superior or inferior to another, such acts are heavily politicised.

Gramsci's specific thoughts on language and linguistics will be discussed in further detail in later chapters, but it is useful at this stage to cite a passage in which he discusses one way of viewing the distinction between language and dialect. This revealing extract shows a relatively strong proto-Whorfian conception of language:

Se è vero che ogni linguaggio contiene gli elementi di una concezione del mondo e di una cultura, sarà anche vero che dal linguaggio di ognuno si può giudicare la maggiore o minore complessità della sua concezione del mondo. Chi parla solo il dialetto o comprende la lingua nazionale in gradi diversi, partecipa necessariamente di una intuizione del mondo più o meno ristretta e provinciale, fossilizzata, anacronistica in confronto delle grandi correnti di pensiero che dominano la storia mondiale. I suoi interessi saranno ristretti, più o meno corporativi o economicistici, non universali. Se non sempre è possibile imparare più lingue straniere per mettersi a contatto con vite culturali diverse, occorre almeno imparare bene la lingua nazionale. Una grande cultura può tradursi nella lingua di un'altra grande cultura, cioè una grande lingua nazionale, storicamente ricca e complessa, può tradurre

²⁶ Einar Haugen, 'Dialect, Language, Nation', *American Anthropologist*, 68 (1966), 922-935 (p. 923).

²⁷ Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, 2nd edn. (London: Fontana Press, 1983), p. 105.

qualsiasi altra grande cultura, cioè essere una espressione mondiale. Ma un dialetto non può fare la stessa cosa.²⁸

If it is true that every language contains the elements of a conception of the world and of a culture, it will also be true that from any person's language it is possible to judge the greater or lesser complexity of that person's conception of the world. Those who speak only dialect or understand the national language to varying degrees, necessarily experience a more or less restricted and provincial intuition of the world, fossilised and anachronistic in relation to the great currents of thought that dominate world history. Their interests will be restricted, more or less corporative or economistic, not universal. Although it is not always possible to learn a number of foreign languages in order to come into contact with different cultural lives, it is at least necessary to learn the national language well. A great culture can be translated into the language of another great culture, that is to say a great national language, historically rich and complex, can translate any other great culture, in other words it can be a global expression. But a dialect cannot do the same thing.

This passage demonstrates a connection that is frequently made by others between dialect and provincial world-view. Following the less deterministic version of the Whorfian hypothesis, it would seem that the use of a specific language should not necessarily restrict or limit a person's world-view, but Gramsci's commentary reflects a commonly held view that dialects, if perceived as subordinate to languages, are not 'full' languages, and that only a national language can fulfil such a role.

An especially influential sociolinguistic understanding of the otherwise arbitrary division between language and dialect is that of Heinz Kloss (1904-1987). Kloss puts forward that linguistic varieties could achieve definition as 'languages' through either of two primary means.²⁹ His first category is *Abstandsprachen* (languages by distance): linguistic varieties in

²⁸ Antonio Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, ed. by Valentino Gerratana, 4 vols (Turin: Einaudi, 2007), II, p. 1377.

²⁹ Heinz Kloss, "'Abstand Languages" and "Ausbau Languages"', *Anthropological Linguistics*, 9.7 (1967), 29-41.

this category are commonly considered as independent languages as a result of linguistic distance from other languages. The less mutual comprehension is possible between two varieties, the less likely it is that either of those varieties would be considered a dialect of the other. By way of example, English and Scots may not qualify as *Abstandsprachen* in relation to each other, as they allow for a high degree of mutual intelligibility, whereas French and Italian may be considered sufficiently linguistically 'distant' to qualify, although such judgments will vary from one individual to another. Kloss's second category is *Ausbausprachen* (languages by development), which includes those linguistic varieties frequently defined as languages on the basis of their history of independent development, cultivation, planning or management (see 1.6 below) through, for example, literature, standardisation, use as a national language or use in certain institutional contexts such as in religious services or in the courts. English and Scots do each have a history of separate development, as do French and Italian, so both pairs would qualify as *Ausbausprachen*. It is important to bear in mind, however, that these labels are not necessary permanent, and an *Ausbau* process in particular can slow down, come to a halt or even be reversed by historical developments.³⁰

In a later article, Kloss also describes the differences between the societal functions of a *Normaldialekt* ('normal dialect'), restricted for instance in the media to light entertainment, of a *Halbsprache* ('half language'), which is a highly developed dialect used more broadly, for example in basic news bulletins, and of an *Ausbausprache* or *Vollsprache* ('full language').³¹

³⁰ Robert McColl Millar, *Language, Nation and Power: An Introduction* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 56.

³¹ Heinz Kloss, 'Abstandsprachen und Ausbausprachen', in *Zur Theorie des Dialekts*, ed. by Joachim Göschel, Norbert Nail and Gaston van der Elst (Wiesbaden: Frank Steiner, 1976), pp. 301-322.

The designations *Halbsprache* and *Vollsprache* are reminiscent of the world-view connotations of Gramsci's comment on the limitations of dialectal monolingualism above.

The artificial, arbitrary and intensely political nature of the definitions of dialect and language is shown convincingly in Spolsky's account:

A dialect becomes a language when it is recognised as such: recently, the prime ministers of Romania and Moldova are reported to have argued (the former speaking in French and the latter in Russian) at an international congress over whether their two varieties were one language or two.³²

As this thesis will pursue a Gramscian methodology, it is relevant to note here a fundamental implication of Marxist thought for the idea of dialect. A word with strong Marxist resonance is *dialectic*. This word shares the Greek root of *dialect* and was once used to describe 'the art of discussion and debate, and then, by derivation, the investigation of truth and discussion'.³³ From the philosophical use of this technique in the Platonic and Socratic traditions, the sense of the term was extended to cover 'argument in a more general way'.³⁴ Then a particular use of dialectics emerged among German philosophers. Williams explains that, while Kant highlighted the contradictions that could arise through dialectical reasoning, Hegel saw that 'the dialectical process was [...] the continual unification of opposites, in the complex relation of parts to a whole'.³⁵ It was this strand of Hegel's thought that was continued by Marx and Engels, and which they combined with Feuerbach's materialism. This etymological link has generally been overlooked in studies of Marxist

³² Bernard Spolsky, *Language Management* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 1.

³³ Williams, *Keywords*, p. 106.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

thought on language. In fact, it is often stated that 'the assertions concerning language are poor and fragmentary in the classical literature of Marxism'.³⁶

A dialectic approach is, perhaps, also required when weighing up the terms 'language' and 'dialect': the tension between these two definitions is typical of variables in dialectical studies. As will be seen with specific reference to the Italian context, just as a geolinguistic continuum can exist between languages and dialects, there is also a sociolinguistic continuum or spectrum between national standard language and local dialect, including a range of intermediate varieties (see Chapter 4).

The notion of tension and of a dialectical process is also fundamental to understanding how ideologies operate at the interface between language and society:

The total linguistic fact, the datum for a science of language, is irreducibly dialectic in nature. It is an instable mutual interaction of meaningful sign forms contextualized to situations of interested human use and mediated by the fact of cultural ideology.³⁷

The relationship between language and society is essentially bi-directional: society influences language, and language can influence society.

Ferguson's original model of 'diglossia' (see 1.1 above) somewhat puzzlingly sought to exclude most western European cases of standard languages in coexistence with dialects, even though one of the cases he examined was Swiss German, which could fit that very description. The expanded definition of diglossia, on the other hand, describes very neatly the majority of situations in which spoken dialects are accorded a 'low' status while the

³⁶ G. Mininni, 'Marxist Theories of Language', in *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*, ed. by Keith Brown et al., 2nd edn., 14 vols (Oxford: Elsevier, 2006), vii, pp. 526-530 (p. 527).

³⁷ Michael Silverstein, 'Language and the Culture of Gender: At the Intersection of Structure, Usage and Ideology', in *Semiotic Mediation: Sociocultural and Psychological Perspectives*, ed. by Elizabeth Mertz and Richard J. Parmentier (Orlando: Academic Press, 1985), pp. 219-259 (p. 220).

standard language assumes a 'high' prestige value. Even before Ferguson elaborated his version of diglossia, however, Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin (1895-1975) had outlined the notion of 'heteroglossia', according to which language is always inherently composed of many different ways of speaking, indeed 'language is heteroglot from top to bottom'.³⁸ From Bakhtin's dialogic approach, 'the tension between the unitary [standard] language and heteroglossia constitutes the arena of the class struggle'.³⁹

This tension can also be played out in other ways. Einar Haugen described a kind of bilingualism that he calls 'schizoglossia':

Schizoglossia may be described as a linguistic malady which may arise in speakers and writers who are exposed to more than one variety of their own language. Under favourable or more precisely, unfavourable conditions, the symptoms may include acute discomfort in the region of the diaphragm and the vocal chords.⁴⁰

Haugen claims that this describes the situation in Norway better than the term 'diglossia' does, as the two official written standards Bokmål and Nynorsk are, according to him, 'little more than divergent dialects of one language'.⁴¹ While diglossia is primarily concerned with differing functions of two linguistic varieties, schizoglossia is more deeply rooted in speakers' psychology and cognitive functions. He recognises that many linguists see the co-existence of different languages or of non-standard variants as a non-problem, but he claims that schizoglossia is seen as a significant problem by society in general, and that

³⁸ Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. by Michael Holquist, trans. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), p. 291.

³⁹ Joseph, *Language and Politics*, p. 46.

⁴⁰ Einar Haugen, 'Schizoglossia and the Linguistic Norm', *Georgetown University Monograph Series on Language and Linguistics*, 15 (1962), 63-73; repr. in *The Ecology of Language: Essays by Einar Haugen*, ed. by Anwar S. Dil (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1972), pp. 148-158 (p. 148).

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

normalisation in order 'to provide a common code for those who need one' can be a cure for this 'malady'.⁴²

Revisiting the notion of Norway as a 'schizoglossic' society, Tove Bull cites the views of other linguists, such as Peter Trudgill, who view Norway as a great linguistic democracy, and she helpfully suggests that schizoglossia need not always be seen as a 'malady'. In that light, Norway certainly does witness much schizoglossia, although schizoglossia as a 'malady' is much less common in Norway than in many other places. Furthermore, normalisation is not always so easily accepted as a cure for schizoglossia in Norway, as will be borne out in this thesis.⁴³ Italy, like 'every complex civilized community',⁴⁴ has also produced a schizoglossic situation for most people. The existence of such a relatively fixed norm in Italy – compared both to Norwegian as a whole and to each standard of Norwegian individually, with their impressive scope for variation – has certainly provided a clear cure for Italian schizoglossia, but patients have reacted in different ways to this medicine, as will be seen in the present study.

1.5 Language and nationalism

One of the most critical political implications of language lies in the links between language and nationalism. Nations are, as Benedict Anderson has described them, 'imagined communities'.⁴⁵ All it takes is desire and motivation, the will for nationhood. Once, for example, someone started using the words 'Italy' and 'Italian', because they wanted there to

⁴² Ibid., p. 154.

⁴³ Tove Bull, 'Norsk i Norge', in *De mange språk i Norge: Flerspråklighet på norsk*, ed. by Tove Bull and Anna-Riitta Lindgren (Oslo: Novus, 2009), pp. 185-210 (pp. 200-201).

⁴⁴ Haugen, 'Schizoglossia and the Linguistic Norm', p. 148.

⁴⁵ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, revised edn. (London: Verso, 2006).

be something called 'Italy' and someone called an 'Italian'. This was a moment of imagination. If enough people share this desire and there is enough momentum for the idea, then Italy and Italians become reality. It can therefore be argued that nations 'are best thought of as *social fictions* rather than real entities'.⁴⁶

The members of a nation have certain images that create the idea of a community. John Dickie outlines at least four of the numerous ways in which the idea of the nation is created or strengthened: *narrative*, *symbols*, *geographical space* and *differentiation*, which could also be termed exclusion.⁴⁷ Language is linked to all of these, but especially to the first two.

Narrative is concerned with the story of the nation, often told through national histories. The imagined, even mythical, political communities that are nations depend on these narratives to create the belief that the nation is not imagined, that it is a natural entity that has always existed, or that has existed for however long is necessary in order to appear legitimate or to ensure the validity of the contention that there is a nation. The organisation of education on a national basis is central to this aim. Universal education systems teach children the skills that are required by the nation and, often subtly, they teach and reinforce the narrative of the nation. Crucially, they also instruct a population in how to use the national language, and that language is often employed as a tool to reinforce national origin myths. Since nationalisms frequently come into being only through resistance to their oppression, a nationalist struggle can be characterised as 'a defence of something which comes to be only through being experienced as lost or endangered'.⁴⁸ A dialectical approach

⁴⁶ John Dickie, 'Imagined Italies', in *Italian Cultural Studies: An Introduction*, ed. by David Forgacs and Robert Lumley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 19-33 (p. 20), emphasis in original.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Slavoj Žižek, 'For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor', 2nd edn. (London: Verso, 2002), p. 213.

can reveal 'the "fetish" of an Origin by means of which the circle (the synchronous system) endeavours to conceal its vicious character'.⁴⁹ By the same means, a dialectical understanding of the links between dialect and national standard languages reveals the origin myth of national languages.

Symbols could include public, collective symbols both official, such as flags, and unofficial, such as national cuisine or sports teams. A national language is often one of the strongest symbols of nationalism, whether its status as national or official language is *de jure* or *de facto*. Other symbols could be personal or private, such as poems symbolic of the nation or particular views of the landscape that, for a given person, might symbolise the nation. Many public symbols of nationhood could be classified as examples of what Michael Billig has called 'banal nationalism'.⁵⁰ According to Billig, when we think of nationalism, we shouldn't just think of the 'passionately waved flag', but also 'routine flags'.⁵¹ Many symbols of nationhood we see around ourselves, such as flags, national symbols on coins or national identity stickers on cars are so commonplace that they become less obvious as symbols of nationalism outside of specific events. The very fact that these symbols are there surrounding us, however, means that they are constantly reminding us of the supposed existence of the nation. They allow for the reproduction of the original imagining of the nation (see also 1.6 below for more discussion of 'banal nationalism').⁵²

The landscape can also form part of the category of geographical space. A nation's landscape can be infused with meaning. Its territory can also be defended, expanded, reclaimed or lost. Not all nations have a clearly defined territory, and these are sometimes

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage Publications, 1995).

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 8.

⁵² Ibid., p. 70.

among the so-called 'stateless nations' or 'nations without states'. Language can be a key to defining the extent of a nation's territorial claim.

The borders of the nation's territory also set the fundamental premise for another form of national imagination; through differentiation, or through the exclusion of what is not part of the national collective. This requires an antithesis of what belongs in the nation, which has often taken the form of foreigners or fellow nationals within the state who do not conform to contemporary national ideals. In other words, nationhood requires the existence of Others, who may often be identified as those who do not speak the national language.

Linguistic identity, therefore, plays an important role in establishing national cohesion and differentiation as a basis for nation-building and for a continued perception of community feeling, but it can also indicate where there are flaws in another powerful illusion of nationalism: that a national community is horizontal, opposed to earlier religious or dynastic structures that had been arranged vertically. The horizontal notion of comradeship or fellowship is, after all, what has made it possible for so many millions of people to be willing to die for 'their nations' over the past two centuries.⁵³ Although many who have fought for national causes were conscripted, the idea of conscription in many countries also ties into this concept of nationally-based solidarity.

The selection of a standard national language not only implies the definition of a standard language next to dialects, but also leads to the notion of a 'singular' language, of which dialects are then seen as sub-entities.⁵⁴ When linguistic standards or norms develop, 'whatever is identified as the good or correct form of the language empowers those who

⁵³ Anderson, p. 7.

⁵⁴ Williams, *Keywords*, p. 106.

have it as part of their linguistic repertoire', while those who lack it are made less powerful.⁵⁵

This is a question of cultural capital or, more specifically, linguistic capital, which can 'be shown to depend, via the structure of chances of access to the educational system, on the structure of class relations'.⁵⁶

As well as the national standard language being spread to the population by educators, there is also the considerable impact of peer pressure, which among children learning a language can manifest itself in 'numerous instances of mutual ridicule and intolerance on the part of the still untutored savages', aiming to eradicate 'schizoglossia'.⁵⁷

National languages can come into conflict not only with their subordinated dialects or with other minority languages in their geographical reach, but also with other national languages or international languages. The global influence of the English language, in particular, is currently a major concern for those who believe that it is constricting cultural expression in other languages, and some hold that such language spread is threatening the very existence of many languages. It is frequently the specific cultural implications of English language use, and its massive cultural capital, that cause the most alarm. English is often associated with globalisation, multi-national business and hegemonic Western culture, especially the Anglophone cultures of North America and the British and Irish Isles. Also within countries where English is recognised as an official language, it can be perceived as a 'colonial' or 'imperialist' language, not least when its relationship with indigenous or minority languages is concerned.

As Joseph notes, businesspeople may frequently see the dominant world position of English as '[a fact] of life that educational systems must adjust to', and anthropologists may

⁵⁵ Joseph, *Language and Politics*, p. 44.

⁵⁶ Bourdieu, p. 64.

⁵⁷ Haugen, 'Schizoglossia and the Linguistic Norm', p. 152.

lament the speed of change while still accepting 'the notion that cultures are never stable', but linguists are likely to react more negatively.⁵⁸ One such linguist is Robert Phillipson, who took a critical stance to the hegemonic spread of English and to its international promotion by British and American governments, as well as to the English language teaching profession (see 2.4 below).

What is really preventing the spread of English as a truly international language, then, is not just the strength of the national languages it comes up against, but also its own national, political and ideological connotations. Indeed, it is currently virtually impossible for any national language to become a universally accepted international language, as is recognised by supporters of non-aligned international languages such as Esperanto.⁵⁹

Although national languages may have their limitations on an international or supranational level, the lack of a national stage on which to be used still works even more strongly against the greater recognition of a language, as is the experience of many regional languages in Italy. Yet neither does the existence of a strong national identity with linguistic connotations always guarantee linguistic vitality, as testified by the cases of the Scots or Gaelic languages in Scotland. Perhaps most importantly of all, however, the lack of a clear linguistic history can be highly detrimental to language promotion, as 'artificial' interlanguages like Esperanto show.

⁵⁸ John E. Joseph, *Language and Identity: National, Ethnic, Religious* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

⁵⁹ W. J. Clark, *International Language: Past, Present and Future, with Specimens of Esperanto and Grammar* (London: J. M. Dent, 1907), pp. 37-38, cited in Joseph, *Language and Identity*, p. 188.

1.6 Language policy

The terms *language policy* and *language planning* are occasionally used as approximate synonyms of one another, but conflating these terms obscures the multi-dimensional nature of political interactions with language. Language planning can be understood as specific and explicitly stated notions of how language should be used or what form language should take. Language policy, on the other hand, is a broader term, which can encompass language planning.

Spolsky describes three broad components of language policy: management, practices and beliefs.⁶⁰ *Language management* involves specifically directed intervention intended to alter or to reinforce the linguistic situation. This intervention could be carried out by authorities, institutions, private businesses, interest groups or individuals. It is this language management component alone that best equates to the notion of 'language planning'. *Language practices* make up the actual exercise of language use in a society. Of particular interest in language practices are the various choices that individuals make between different words, sounds, grammatical structures, codes or languages. *Language beliefs*, meanwhile, consist of the relative values that speakers associate with different linguistic codes, varieties or linguistic choices. Language policy is, at its core, 'all about choices'.⁶¹ So, while language planning (or 'management') is a component of, and therefore implies 'the notion of language policy, the converse is not true'.⁶²

⁶⁰ Bernard Spolsky, *Language Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

⁶¹ Spolsky, *Language Management*, p. 1.

⁶² Jean-Louis Calvet, *Language Wars and Linguistic Politics*, trans. by Michel Petheram (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 115.

Adopting Spolsky's tripartite model of language policy, Shohamy further describes the 'mechanisms' through which 'real' language policy can be seen.⁶³ This 'real' or 'de facto' policy may stand in opposition to a 'declared' policy, although formal policy documentation is certainly a part of the process of constructing the 'real' situation. Shohamy locates these mechanisms as operating 'at the heart of the battle between ideology and practice' (see figure 1.1).⁶⁴

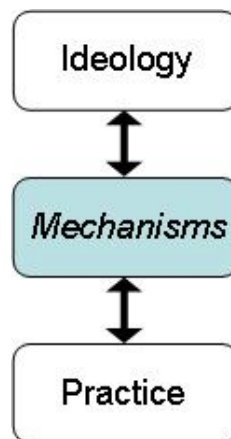


Figure 1.1 The position of mechanisms in between ideology and practice (after Shohamy, p. 54).

The mechanisms described by Shohamy are 'overt and covert devices' that take studies of language policy 'beyond official documents and towards an understanding of [language policy] in terms of the means used to influence policies'.⁶⁵ While all actors in language policy use these mechanisms, authorities are able to use them to more powerful effect due to their more extensive resources and their greater opportunity to apply

⁶³ Elana Shohamy, *Language Policy: Hidden Agendas and New Approaches* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006).

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

incentives, sanctions and penalties. Shohamy lists five main categories of mechanisms (see figure 1.2).

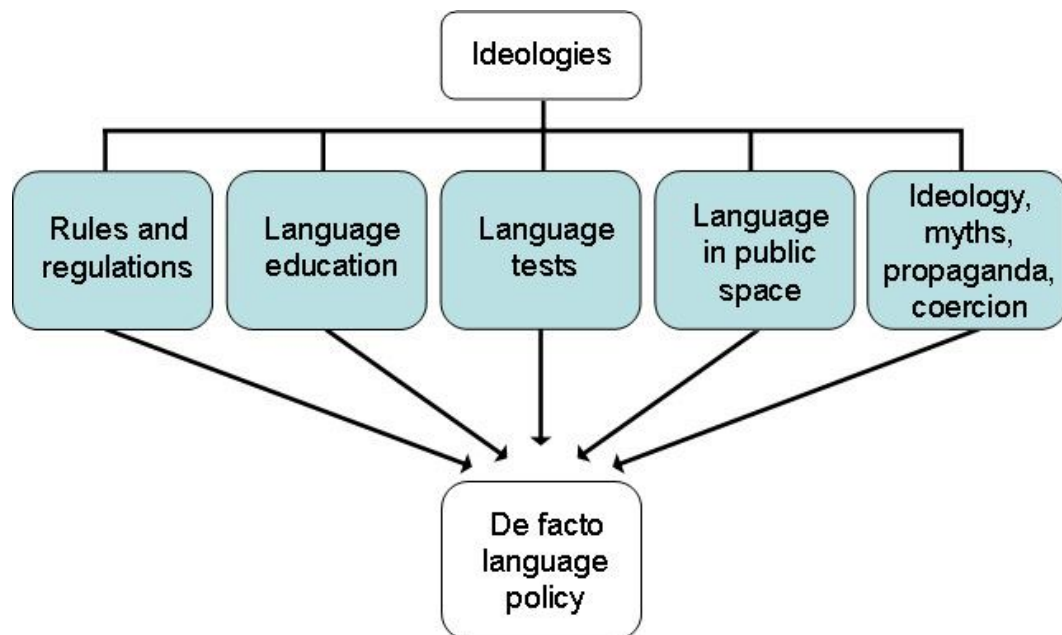


Figure 1.2 The mechanisms operating between ideologies and de facto language policy (after Shohamy, p. 58).

The first set of mechanisms (*rules and regulations*) concerns declared policies, including laws, standardisation of language and the selection or declaration of 'official' languages. The second mechanism (*language education*) has a branch (*language tests*) that warrants its own category as a distinct mechanism as it is so instrumental in defining what is linguistically correct and what is not for a wide variety of actors, both within educational frameworks and, through the recognition of qualifications, for society at large. The fourth set of mechanisms is related to what has recently been referred to as the 'linguistic landscape',⁶⁶ namely the use of *language in public space*, such as on road signs, street signs or shop signs

⁶⁶ Rodrigue Landry and Richard Y. Bourhis, 'Linguistic Landscape and Ethnolinguistic Vitality: An Empirical Study', *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 16 (1997), 23-49.

and in advertising posters. The final category is sometimes ignored in studies of language policy, but has a major impact. It encompasses *ideologies*, for instance linking language and nation, *myths*, including the inflated common notion of ‘correctness’ in language and grammar, *propaganda* as a means of diffusing ideologies and myths, and *coercion*. The latter implies the especially aggressive persecution of languages and their speakers, from the creation of negative stereotypes about languages to, at the most extreme, acts of violence.⁶⁷

Although the fifth category is perhaps the least commonly examined in language policy studies, it is the only truly essential mechanism in language policy. Of the other categories, not all languages are subject to rules or regulations, to diffusion through formal education or to testing, although such areas of language management are likely to have at least some impact on the practices and beliefs associated with all languages in a society. Language in public space, meanwhile, is principally concerned with the visual dimension, and especially with written language although, for example, the presence of a sign language interpreter at a public event is also an important symbol of the visibility of a language, and spoken public announcements could also be considered part of the linguistic landscape. Within the fifth category, ideologies in particular can be found operating in all linguistic cultures.

Some of the mechanisms of national language policy, as expressions of nationalism we encounter in our everyday lives, can be seen as characteristic examples of ‘banal nationalism’ (see 1.5 above). This term is, however, increasingly seen to be misleading. It is quite possible that Billig intended the concept to be broadly defined, as ‘banality’ can have many meanings, and instances of banal nationalism can range from the mundane to the extreme or exotic. The most frequent interpretation of the concept has tended to focus on the mundane,

⁶⁷ Shohamy, pp. 130-132.

but a more nuanced view can see the everyday symbols of nationalism as key instruments for understanding the actual experience of nationalism and of politics. Furthermore, such symbolism is by no means beyond state influence and can become a battleground for those who wish to challenge existing power structures, as is the case with the campaign for bilingual signs in Wales.⁶⁸ Also, returning to the concept of habitus (see 1.3 above), Bourdieu claims that, in fact, the 'most influential' factors to shape the habitus do so through 'suggestions inscribed in the most apparently insignificant aspects of the things, situations and practices of everyday life'.⁶⁹

This thesis will consider a range of these language policy mechanisms, especially through the prism of language activism (see 1.7 below). It will be seen that the Nynorsk movement in Norway has certainly made use of all five categories of language policy mechanisms. The Lega Nord has also expressed at least a desire to use all these mechanisms in the promotion of northern Italian dialects, but the most activity by far has been in the fields of language in public space and ideologies, myths, propaganda and coercion.

1.7 Language activism: Language policy 'from below'

A significant category of language policy actors is constituted by *language activists*, who can be defined as 'those people or groups who attempt to influence national language policy by persuading the government to support one or more languages'.⁷⁰ It is upon these actors that this thesis will direct particular attention: in Norway the various, often grass-roots, organisations that promote Nynorsk and dialects, and in Italy the Lega Nord in its

⁶⁸ Rhys Jones and Peter Merriman, 'Hot, Banal and Everyday Nationalism: Bilingual Road Signs in Wales', *Political Geography*, 28 (2009), 164-173.

⁶⁹ Bourdieu, p. 51.

⁷⁰ Spolsky, *Language Management*, p. 184.

promotion of northern dialects. While many studies of language policy have traditionally highlighted *top-down*, i.e. authority-led, language management processes, an increasing number of scholars are looking at *bottom-up* activism. This approach to 'language planning from below'⁷¹ often deals with micro-level linguistic activism, but it has also found application at a broader regional, sub-national or national level.

There are domains in which the distinction between 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' actors becomes blurred, for instance due to the privatisation of formerly state-run infrastructure.⁷² Meanwhile, the public continues to perceive a degree of authority vested in, for example, privatised railway companies, and so language used on railway signs or in railway announcements can continue to have a semi-prescriptive status. A more nuanced understanding of the difference between 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' actors could, therefore, also include considerations of capital (including economic, social, cultural and symbolic capital) instead of a simple distinction between legitimate supranational, state, regional or local authority actors on the one hand and all other actors on the other. Privatised services are arguably more 'top-down' than state-run services, as the public has less influence on how they are run.

Among those who have turned their attention recently to the role of 'bottom-up' actors in language policy, Andrew Linn has written of the recent changes in Norwegian language policy (see Chapter 6 below) as a recognition by the forces 'above' – essentially

⁷¹ Gabrielle Hogan-Brun, 'Contextualising Language Planning from Below', *Current Issues in Language Planning*, 11 (2010), 91-94.

⁷² Guy Puzey, 'Two-Way Traffic: How Linguistic Landscapes Reflect and Influence the Politics of Language', in *Minority Languages in the Linguistic Landscape*, ed. by Durk Gorter, Heiko F. Marten and Luk Van Mensel (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, in press).

state-appointed language planners – of a dissenting ‘voice’ from ‘below’.⁷³ In his account of Irish language activism, Caoimhghin Ó Croidheáin considers the key importance of the ‘active community’ as a language policy actor in a situation where the Irish state is ‘essentially neutral’.⁷⁴ Who are these activists, though? They can come from varied backgrounds, and there are typically divergent factors that attract them to language issues. In her anthropological study of the politics of language in Corsica, Alexandra Jaffe carried out fieldwork in activist milieux, including in university departments, at linguistic association meetings and courses, and at cultural events. She became aware of a core group of fifty to one hundred ‘*culturels*’, including ‘teachers, authors, artists, performers, amateur linguists, film makers and broadcasters involved in the promotion of Corsican culture’.⁷⁵ This counter-élite, in the sense that it is opposed to the hegemonic French culture, would appear to possess a degree of socio-cultural homogeneity on the basis of the listed professional backgrounds. Still, Jaffe suggests that, if there are relationships between social status and linguistic views or between political and linguistic positions, then they are ‘complex’.⁷⁶

Often, language activists become part of a broader advocacy coalition. This is a formal or informal partnership of ‘people from various governmental and private organizations who both (1) share a set of normative and causal beliefs and (2) engage in a nontrivial degree

⁷³ Andrew R. Linn, ‘Voices from Above – Voices from Below. Who Is Talking and Who Is Listening in Norwegian Language Politics?’, *Current Issues in Language Planning*, 11 (2010), 114-129.

⁷⁴ Caoimhghin Ó Croidheáin, *Language from Below: The Irish Language, Ideology and Power in 20th-Century Ireland* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2006), pp. 26-27.

⁷⁵ Alexandra Jaffe, *Ideologies in Action: Language Policies on Corsica* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1999), p. 4.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

of coordinated activity over time'.⁷⁷ One recent study has revealed how language policy actors have formed advocacy coalitions in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Wales.⁷⁸ In Wales, for example, the membership of an advocacy coalition in favour of the use of Welsh-language signs in public spaces can be traced, and includes the activists of Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg (the Welsh Language Society) and Plaid Cymru as well as top-down institutions of governance such as the National Assembly for Wales, the Welsh Assembly Government, the Welsh Language Board, local councils, public organisations and tourism agencies.⁷⁹ Similarly, the Nynorsk movement is a coalition involving many organisations, including grass-roots associations, publishers, academics, local newspapers and one national newspaper, all with a degree of state endorsement. There are other organisations than the Lega Nord that are also interested in the promotion of dialects, and the Lega Nord partly grew out of an attempt to form an advocacy coalition based on dialect literary circles, but the other groups that seek to promote dialect are perhaps too disparate to form an effective advocacy coalition. Furthermore, there is not always much unity between the political ideologies of the Lega Nord and other dialect activist groups.

Many language activist movements are connected with nationalist tendencies, and this could be claimed of both the movements to be examined here. The Nynorsk movement has shown a strong commitment to ideas of 'Norwegianness', while the Lega Nord even proclaimed their own nation, 'Padania'. The goal of nationalist language activist movements

⁷⁷ Paul A. Sabatier and Hank C. Jenkins-Smith, 'The Advocacy Coalition Framework: An Assessment', in *Theories of the Policy Process*, ed. by Paul A. Sabatier (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999), pp. 117-166 (p. 120), cited in Marián Sloboda and others, 'Carrying out a Language Policy Change: Advocacy Coalitions and the Management of Linguistic Landscape', *Current Issues in Language Planning*, 11 (2010), 95-113 (p. 96).

⁷⁸ Sloboda and others.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

is often reached if the nation in question gains independence.⁸⁰ In the case of Norway, however, the existence of an ongoing linguistic conflict between two standards of Norwegian has ensured that language activism has continued to thrive to the present day. With regards to the Lega Nord, even if 'Padania' has not become an independent state, the party has achieved considerable political power, with numerous elected municipal councillors, provincial and regional representatives, deputies and senators, and the party has been part of several governments in coalition with Silvio Berlusconi, resulting in the appointment of a large number of Lega politicians to high-ranking ministerial posts. Perhaps it was these moves into power that led to an apparent temporary reduction in the Lega's involvement in dialect matters in the second half of the 1990s. More recently, however, the party has taken up the cause of dialects with renewed interest.

In addition to nationalism, language movements are often interested in other issues beyond language, although language 'continues to be a useful issue for ethnic mobilization'.⁸¹ This is very clearly the case with the Lega Nord, a political party that no longer exists solely for the promotion of regional identity and that has carved out a characteristic niche for itself in other policy areas such as immigration and criminality, as well as a current of Euroscepticism. The Nynorsk movement has also mobilised or been affiliated with other causes or counter-cultures, either indirectly through the composition of its members or explicitly as stated policy of individual organisations, as was the case when the Nynorsk organisations opposed Norwegian membership of the European Economic Community in 1972 and of the European Union in 1994.

⁸⁰ Spolsky, *Language Management*, p. 198.

⁸¹ Ibid.

These wider extra-linguistic policy interests of these linguistic sub-cultures could favour their interpretation as 'discourse coalitions', which are defined as 'the ensemble of a set of story lines, the actors that utter these story lines, and the practices that conform to these story lines, all organized around a discourse'.⁸² In these broader discourse coalitions, particular language beliefs and practices form central story lines, and these may either reinforce other ideological beliefs or be undermined by them.

⁸² Maarten A. Hajer, 'Discourse Coalitions and the Institutionalization of Practice: The Case of Acid Rain in Britain', in *The Argumentative Turn in Policy Analysis and Planning*, ed. by Frank Fischer and John Forester (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), pp. 43-76 (p. 47).

2 Theoretical and Methodological Foundations

2.1 Gramsci and Rokkan

Gramscian theory makes for a remarkably dynamic set of methodological tools with which to tackle research questions, even when these are rooted in different times or spaces from those Gramsci himself was familiar with. The intention here is to make use of his terminology and metaphors in order to inform the comparative analysis and shed new light on the interplay between language and politics in Italy and Norway. Of the best known themes in Gramscian thought, those that will be most widely employed here are *hegemony*, *subalternity* and *spontaneity*. Gramsci saw all of language as a system of metaphors, and one of his own militaristic metaphors will be adopted here to describe the *wars of position* represented by the responses to the language questions of Italy and Norway. To illustrate the counter-attacks against the linguistic status quo mounted by political groups, extensive reference will be made in the following chapters to ideologically-oriented texts, political discourse, propaganda and campaigns that have created controversy.

The works by Gramsci that have inspired the greatest theoretical developments are his *Quaderni del carcere (Prison Notebooks)*, in which he covered a variety of historical, cultural and political topics. These were written between 1929 and 1935, during the incarceration that ended with his death in 1937. The notebooks included many references to language, from the very first page to the very last, making him the only communist party founder in the world

whose major work opens and closes with questions of linguistics.¹ In addition to the *Prison Notebooks*, his earlier production will also be considered here. Gramsci's particular interest in linguistics, and his own contributions to the Italian language debate (see Chapter 3 below), have been the subject of a number of previous studies. This thesis will build on these studies, utilising Gramsci's writings to explain more recent developments in Italy, showing that his language-oriented thought still remains relevant today. In addition, by applying Gramscian ideas to explore the Norwegian language question, their value for research outside Gramsci's own geographical frame of reference will be demonstrated.

Complementing the Gramscian approach here will be the theory of Stein Rokkan, which is especially well suited to comparative studies, born as it was out of Rokkan's own comparative explorations of political structures. As well as the comparative line running throughout Rokkan's research, two of his main strands of thought make his work especially relevant to this thesis, namely the *centre-periphery* dichotomy and the composition of *cleavage structures*. It will be seen that centres and peripheries, as levels of analysis, are highly compatible with Gramsci's oppositional pair of hegemony and subalternity, with the hegemonic centres exerting influence over subaltern peripheries. Rokkan studied the connections between economic and cultural cleavages in politically defined territories. Both these sorts of societal divide are significant for the development of language policy, although language is the key component of cultural cleavages in many territories.

¹ Tullio De Mauro, *La cultura degli italiani*, ed. by Francesco Ermani (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 2004), p. 76.

2.2 Gramsci

Critical sociolinguistic investigations may benefit from Marxist or Marxian insights, as such approaches perceive ideologies 'as tied to the interests of particular social groups and to processes of power and dominance'.² This is especially the case for investigations that aim to examine the links between language and ideology:

To be a Marxist in linguistics means to adopt an intrinsically debunking perspective of the relationships of social control that are formed and/or expressed in the language. [...] Marxism aims at putting a sort of 'metasemiotics,' meant as a critical theory of ideologies, at the basis of the language sciences.³

This association between ideology and semiotics is notable in the work of the Soviet linguist Valentin Nikolaevich Voloshinov (1895-1936).⁴ He posited that 'the study of the ideologies embodied in the ethical, religious, juridical, political and literary institutions of a society must be based on an explanation of the principles regulating their constitutive elements: i.e. signs'.⁵ Still, while Voloshinov believed that the class struggle is intrinsic to the linguistic sign, he did not believe that changing language could have any effect on the class struggle; for him, the 'direction of influence is strictly one-way'.⁶

Gramsci also consistently emphasised the links between language and ideology, but with more far-reaching conclusions. Firstly, as shown by Lo Piparo, the spread of languages was used by Gramsci as a metaphor for the spread of political power.⁷ Indeed, Gramsci is highly likely to have first met the term 'hegemony' through his studies of linguistics at the

² J. Blommaert, 'Language Ideology', in *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*, ed. by Keith Brown et al., 2nd edn., 14 vols (Oxford: Elsevier, 2006), vi, pp. 510-522 (p. 510).

³ Mininni, pp. 529-530.

⁴ Valentin N. Vološinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, trans. by Ladislav Matejka and I. R. Titunik (London: Seminar Press, 1973 [1930]).

⁵ Mininni, p. 528.

⁶ Joseph, *Language and Politics*, p. 115.

⁷ Franco Lo Piparo, *Lingua intellettuale egemonia in Gramsci* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1979).

University of Turin, as the word *egemonia* was being used – together with *dittatura* (dictatorship), *fascino* (attraction) and *prestigio* (prestige) – by linguists of the time in relation to language change.⁸

Furthermore, Gramsci played an active role in the development of the Italian language question. Gramsci's own preferred path for the consolidation of an Italian national language was that '*tutto un complesso di processi molecolari*'⁹ ('a whole complex of molecular processes')¹⁰ taking place between *spontaneous grammars* should lead to the creation of a unified *normative grammar* (see Chapter 3 below for further discussion of Gramsci's position on the Italian national language question). Such molecular processes may be consonant with what Guattari called 'molecular revolutions'.¹¹ The methodology of this thesis will be to observe the molecular processes that constitute mechanisms of language policy in the cultures and cultural consciences that gravitate around specific languages or dialects as well as around groups of language activists. Crucially, Gramsci recognised that, as well as language making an apposite metaphor for social and political change, language can also embody these changes in a more concrete way.

Ogni volta che affiora, in un modo o nell'altro, la quistione della lingua, significa che si sta imponendo una serie di altri problemi: la formazione e l'allargamento della classe dirigente, la necessità di stabilire rapporti più intimi e sicuri tra i gruppi dirigenti e la massa popolare-nazionale, cioè di riorganizzare l'egemonia culturale.¹²

Every time that, in one way or another, the language question surfaces, it means that a series of other problems are emerging:

⁸ Ibid., pp. 106-108.

⁹ Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, III, p. 2345.

¹⁰ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Cultural Writings*, ed. by David Forgacs and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, trans. by William Boelhower (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1985), p. 183.

¹¹ Félix Guattari, *Molecular Revolution: Psychiatry and Politics*, trans. by Rosemary Sheed (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984).

¹² Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, III, p. 2346.

education and the enlargement of the ruling class, the necessity of establishing more intimate and secure relations between the ruling groups and the national-popular masses, that is to say the reorganisation of cultural hegemony.

So language policy is an especially revealing indicator of the state of cultural hegemonies, and language activism could either work to reinforce existing cultural hegemonies or to further the cause of counter-hegemonies.

It is, however, also Gramsci's special conception of ideology that makes his work particularly useful for the exploration of the links between language and ideology. Gramsci describes the evolution of *Weltanschauungen*, or world-views, examples of which could include religion, philosophy and Marxism. For Gramsci, Marx could be seen as the creator of a world-view.¹³ This point of view has been countered by others, such as Althusser, who believes that, by apparently comparing Marxism and religion, Gramsci neglects the scientificity of Marxism that sets it apart from other world-views.¹⁴ For Bobbio, on the other hand, Gramsci takes a significant theoretical step by concentrating on the superstructure, instead of the base, as a locus of power, as it is in the superstructure that cultural forces align to create hegemony.¹⁵

[N]on la struttura economica determina direttamente l'azione politica, ma l'interpretazione che si dà di essa e delle così dette leggi che ne governano lo svolgimento.¹⁶

¹³ Ibid., II, pp. 881-882.

¹⁴ Louis Althusser, 'L'objet du "Capital"', in *Lire le Capital*, ed. by Louis Althusser and Étienne Balibar, 4 vols (Paris: Maspero, 1973), I, pp. 87-184 (p. 166).

¹⁵ Norberto Bobbio, 'Gramsci e la concezione della società civile', in *Gramsci e la cultura contemporanea: Atti del Convegno internazionale di studi gramsciani tenuto a Cagliari il 23-27 aprile 1967*, ed. by Pietro Rossi, 2 vols (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1969), I, pp. 75-100.

¹⁶ Antonio Gramsci, *Il nostro Marx: 1918-1919*, ed. by Sergio Caprioglio (Turin: Einaudi, 1984), p. 205.

It is not the economic structure that directly determines political action, but the interpretation of it and of the so-called laws that govern its development.

From this viewpoint, Gramsci does not deny the strong power of economic circumstances.

Instead, he expresses a desire for people to be empowered to liberate themselves from domination through the reinterpretation of the economic base structure, which may imply the promotion of counter-hegemonies.

2.2.1 Hegemony

Although Gramsci's interpretation of hegemony has perhaps been the most influential in many fields of theory, the term was certainly not his invention, and nor was he even the first Marxist to use it prolifically: Georgi Plekhanov and Lenin had both previously developed ideas of hegemony.¹⁷ The word originally comes from the Greek *ἡγεμονία*, itself from *ἡγεμῶν*, 'leader', and appeared in English as 'Aegemonie' in 1567.¹⁸ The word came to be used more commonly to describe political leadership or predominance in the nineteenth century but, as Gramsci and others since him have seen it, this dominant influence 'is not limited to matters of direct political control but seeks to describe a more general way of seeing the world and human nature and relationships'.¹⁹ Hegemony results in 'a saturation of the whole process of living' to the extent that 'the pressures and limits of what can ultimately be seen as a specific economic, political, and cultural system seem to most of us the pressures and limits of simple experience and common sense'.²⁰

¹⁷ Peter Ives, *Language and Hegemony in Gramsci* (London: Pluto Press, 2004), pp. 63-64.

¹⁸ *Oxford English Dictionary*.

¹⁹ Williams, *Keywords*, pp. 144-145.

²⁰ Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 110.

Gramsci cultivated his idea of hegemony in the *Prison Notebooks*, but he typically does not provide clear definitions of most of his keywords. Instead of providing concise definitions for hegemony, and other terms he would develop, Gramsci's interpretation of these terms is shown through their application in analyses of historical events. As it happens, Gramsci's refusal to invent new terms is particularly compatible with his political ideas on language:

Just as [Gramsci] does not want rural peasants to adopt a language imposed on them from somewhere else, he does not want readers to adopt a new set of terms that are defined outside their usage.²¹

Running through Gramsci's original treatment of hegemony are two important threads that represented methodological innovations. Firstly, everything – including what could appear to be inconsequential private actions – is analysed as political. Secondly, social classes, organisations and institutions are seen as arenas in which hegemony exerts its influence, and in which consent to that influence is formed, and this allows for institutional analyses of ideologies. In connecting these two themes, Gramsci establishes a relationship between coercion and consent.²²

L'esercizio 'normale' dell'egemonia nel terreno diventato classico del regime parlamentare, è caratterizzato dalla combinazione della forza e del consenso che si equilibrano variamente, senza che la forza soverchi di troppo il consenso, anzi cercando di ottenere che la forza appaia appoggiata sul consenso della maggioranza, espresso dai così detti organi dell'opinione pubblica – giornali e associazioni – i quali, perciò, in certe situazioni, vengono moltiplicati artificialmente.²³

²¹ Ives, p. 65.

²² Ibid., pp. 70-71.

²³ Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, III, p. 1638.

The 'normal' exercise of hegemony on the now classical terrain of the parliamentary régime is characterised by the combination of force and consent, which balance each other reciprocally, without force predominating excessively over consent. Indeed, the attempt is always made to ensure that force will appear to be based on the consent of the majority, expressed by the so-called organs of public opinion – newspapers and associations – which, therefore, in certain situations, are artificially multiplied.²⁴

Popular consent for hegemony appears 'spontaneous', but it is the result of a 'prestige' born historically from the position of the ruling classes in terms of their ownership of the means of production, and consent is maintained by intellectuals working to legitimise it.²⁵

Hegemonic relationships can be observed between languages when one language is in a dominant position *vis-à-vis* another. A dominant language may have obtained its status through conscious language planning and policy directed at furthering its use in education and official circumstances, or even in the private sphere. This policy may represent coercion, while the use of this language and its growing prestige, or necessity, ensure that a certain level of consent is reached in society. Over time, the consent for the use of the dominant language may grow steadily to the point where any momentum the minor language had is lost, and it falls into disuse or dies.

When reading Gramsci, doubt can occasionally arise as to whether he is criticising hegemony as a form of domination or whether he is suggesting it as the method by which communists should assume power.²⁶ Joseph Femia describes three main types of hegemony to be found in Gramsci's writings.²⁷ *Integral hegemony* is the most democratic form of

²⁴ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1971), p.80.

²⁵ Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, III, p. 1519.

²⁶ Ives, p. 68.

²⁷ Joseph V. Femia, *Gramsci's Political Thought: Hegemony, Consciousness, and the Revolutionary Process* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), pp. 46-47.

hegemony, encouraged by Gramsci, by which the ruling class more than satisfies both its own interests and needs and those of all the main social groups. Integral hegemony also sees an 'organic', reciprocal relationship between the ruling group and those being ruled. A *decadent hegemony* is what becomes of an integral hegemony that has corroded to the point that the ruling group can no longer satisfy all of society, and support is lost. Decadent hegemonies are fragile, but can remain powerful when there are no real alternatives. *Minimal hegemonies* are those most criticised by Gramsci, as they cater only for élites and govern by *trasformismo*, by assimilating opposition leaders into their own structures of governance, and thereby decapitating the opposition.

As shall be seen in the following chapter, Gramsci's support for the establishment of a common national language does not mean he wished to create a monolingual nation. An effective national language 'demands that [its] hegemony is created democratically through [...] active participation'.²⁸

Hegemony becomes a process including negotiations and critical alterations of one's world-view. The goal is to achieve a common language, not a singular dominant interpretation of everything that happens in the world and all human activity. Various and opposing perspectives can be expressed in such a language. However, this hegemonic (or counterhegemonic) language must be unified enough, coherent enough, to yield effective resistance [sic] to capitalist hegemony (and its language).²⁹

Therefore, a common language that is created organically through the historical processes of linguistic change, with changes negotiated over a long period of time to unite languages, could represent an integral linguistic hegemony.

²⁸ Ives, p. 113.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 114.

If we are to examine today's global linguistic hegemon, the English language, its hegemony could be described as a minimal hegemony. Its status stems first and foremost from the political power achieved by English-speaking states and not entirely through free choice. In the first instance, its dominance rewards those whose first language is English, wherever they are from, as their perspective is more readily embodied within the language. Although growing numbers of speakers of other languages learn English, this is often due to the language's high prestige, much of which is generated by the economic, social, cultural and symbolic capital that lies behind it.

Organic intellectuals – those who are organically bound, primarily through their ideas, to a social group³⁰ – might be best placed to 'improve' popular languages, but they are instead often assimilated into the dominant group. They then come to use the national language and make a transition to being 'traditional' intellectuals. This means that 'average people's previous languages remain unchanged as do their world-views and economic situations'.³¹

2.2.2 Wars of position

Returning to the notion of 'scientificity' (see 2.2 above), in a discussion of 'the concept of "science"', Gramsci underlines the importance of a dialectical approach:

In realtà si può prevedere 'scientificamente' solo la lotta, ma non i momenti concreti di essa, che non possono non essere risultati di forze contrastanti in continuo movimento, non riducibili mai a quantità fisse, perché in esse la quantità diventa continuamente qualità.³²

³⁰ Ibid., p. 76.

³¹ Ibid., p. 104.

³² Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, II, p. 1403.

In reality, only the struggle can be predicted 'scientifically', but not its concrete moments, which cannot be anything but the results of conflicting forces in continuous movement, never reducible to fixed quantities, because their quantity is continuously turning into quality.

Taking the struggle as a central theme, it is possible to observe how hegemonies are challenged. In another adaptation from military terminology, along a similar vein to 'hegemony' and 'subalternity' (see 2.2.3 below), Gramsci used the metaphors *war of manoeuvre* and *war of position* to discuss different methods of working towards a revolution. A war of manoeuvre, in Gramsci's metaphorical sense, is 'any attempt to gain control of the government, whether through armed combat, democratic election or other means', while wars of position involve 'preparations for the war of manoeuvre, positioning one's troops on the battlefield' with the 'general idea that setting the agenda is half the battle'.³³

These military metaphors were inspired by the warfare of the early twentieth century. New technologies for killing had forced armies to engage in extensive trench warfare, including a virtual stalemate on the Western Front lasting from September 1914 to the German offensive in the spring of 1918, which nevertheless caused an enormous number of casualties. In this kind of warfare, the strategic positioning of an army's troops and of their defensive positions was critical. Gramsci recognised that the extended duration of trench conflicts, and of much modern warfare, depended on much more than just the trenches and their positions though; it depended on the situation of the entire polity or territory engaged in war.

La guerra di posizione non è infatti solo costituita dalle trincee vere e proprie, ma da tutto il sistema organizzativo e industriale del territorio che è alle spalle dell'esercito schierato [...]. [L]e

³³ Ives, p. 107.

superstrutture della società civile sono come il sistema delle trincee nella guerra moderna.³⁴

A war of position is not, in reality, constituted simply by the actual trenches, but by the whole organisational and industrial system of the territory which lies to the rear of the army in the field. [...] The superstructures of civil society are like the trench-systems of modern warfare.³⁵

It was, then, the real reliance of trench warfare on infrastructure that led Gramsci to create the metaphor of 'wars of position' with reference to culture and political science. Wars of position often take place within civil society, and wars of manoeuvre against the state.³⁶ One example of the latter would be the 1917 Russian Revolution, but Gramsci saw that in Italy, and most western European countries, wars of position were necessary.

In Oriente lo Stato era tutto, la società civile era primordiale e gelatinosa, nell'Occidente tra Stato e società civile c'era un giusto rapporto e nel tremolio dello Stato si scorgeva subito una robusta struttura della società civile. Lo Stato era solo una trincea avanzata, dietro cui stava una robusta catena di fortezze e di casematte; più o meno, da Stato a Stato, si capisce, ma questo appunto domandava un'accurata ricognizione di carattere nazionale.³⁷

In the East the State was everything, civil society was primordial and gelatinous; in the West, there was a proper relation between State and civil society, and when the State trembled a sturdy structure of civil society was at once revealed. The State was only an outer ditch, behind which there stood a powerful system of fortresses and earthworks: more or less numerous from one State to the next, it goes without saying – but this precisely necessitated an accurate reconnaissance of each individual country.³⁸

³⁴ Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, III, p. 1615.

³⁵ Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, pp. 234-235.

³⁶ Ives, p. 116.

³⁷ Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, II, p. 866.

³⁸ Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p. 238.

This kind of war of position in civil society, effectively carried out, can also serve to ensure that any resulting revolution is an active one, leading to an integral, representative hegemony, as opposed to what Gramsci calls '*rivoluzione passiva*' (passive revolution), borrowing a term from Vincenzo Cuoco. In a passive revolution, the population does not actively participate in the revolutionary process, which instead takes place through, for example, reforms or wars.³⁹ While a war of manoeuvre may be dramatic in its execution, it may not change the superstructure of civil society sufficiently to provide lasting change. Passive revolutions often lead to minimal hegemonies that 'will continually face pressures from the underlying grammars, economic situations and world-views that they failed to engage'.⁴⁰ A war of position, on the other hand, is capable of producing an integral hegemony: in linguistic terms, this could be a democratic national language, as it will be suggested in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 below that Nynorsk is in Norway. The 'passive' solution to the Italian language question, meanwhile, has established a national language that is not as universally representative of the vernaculars of Italian as Nynorsk is of Norwegian dialects.

Peter Ives suggests that linguistic wars of manoeuvre are 'the overtly political and governmental power, including government policy on language, funding for books and dictionaries, and educational policy', essentially top-down language management. Meanwhile, Ives sees linguistic wars of position as the national language questions up to the point when a standard is chosen, and he believes it is these wars of position that determine whether top-down language policy will succeed.⁴¹ However, the intertwined roles of the many actors in language policy and activism, and the position of language in the

³⁹ Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, I, p. 504.

⁴⁰ Ives, p. 104.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 108-109.

superstructure, mean that it may be more apposite to view all language policy and activism as wars of position, with perhaps the exception of the most extreme forms of linguistic coercion (see 1.6 above), in other words overtly physical or violent acts. Furthermore, as this thesis proposes that the language questions of Italy and Norway are not resolved or in a static state, linguistic struggles are better seen as enduring and ongoing wars of position.

2.2.3 Subalternity

Subalternity is an important concept in Gramsci and an intrinsic part of hegemony. This term, transferred from the military lexicon, implies the state of subordination some social groups may be in *vis-à-vis* ruling groups. One feature of subalternity is that subaltern groups 'lack a concrete philosophy or world-view from which to understand and interpret the world', and Ives even claims that '[o]ne could say, they lack their own language'.⁴² This condition is both an aspect of being controlled and a situation that 'prevents subaltern groups from being able to effectively resist physical domination'.⁴³

Language can be seen as an embodiment of a world-view, and Gramsci saw dialect monolingualism, for example, as the perpetuation of a 'provincial', and therefore subaltern, world-view (see 1.4 above). When Gramsci wrote of his desire to put together an account of his own life experiences, the aspect he saw as especially interesting was how he left the periphery of Sardinia to emancipate himself from a provincial world-view and to take on ways of thought that were less regional and more national in the context of European culture. He thought that a move away from provincialism was a unifying factor for Italians, and he saw his own case as a particularly emblematic example.

⁴² Ibid., p. 78.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 79.

Se è vero che una delle necessità più forti della cultura italiana era quella di sprovincializzarsi anche nei centri urbani più avanzati e moderni, tanto più evidente dovrebbe apparire il processo in quanto sperimentato da un 'triplice o quadruplice provinciale' come certo era un giovane sardo del principio del secolo.⁴⁴

If it is true that one of the strongest necessities of Italian culture was that of deprovincialising itself, even in the most advanced and modern urban centres, the process should appear even more evident as experienced by someone who is 'threefold or fourfold provincial' as a young Sardinian at the beginning of the century certainly was.

According to Gramsci, provincialism acted as a strong force entrapping people in a subaltern status within the periphery. Furthermore, there are different levels of provincialism, or peripherality, so that the whole of Italy, at the time Gramsci was writing, could be seen as a periphery in a sense, but with different degrees of peripherality in different regions (see 2.3.1 below for further discussion of the relationship between centres and peripheries). In industrial Turin, Gramsci had moved from a periphery to a modern centre, but he recognised that there were still similarities between the domination of rural peasants and urban workers, and this unity is a recurring theme in his work.⁴⁵

A provincial world-view might be something from which it would be worth being liberated, which in linguistic terms could mean learning a new language, such as a national standard language. Ives notes how, according to Gramsci, 'the lack of knowledge of specific languages is limiting'.⁴⁶ Yet Gramsci also stresses the value of subaltern world-views, highlighting the ways in which they are oppressed by states:

⁴⁴ Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, III, p. 1776.

⁴⁵ Anders Ehnmark, *En by i lys: Antonio Gramscis slutninger*, trans. by Alexander Leborg (Oslo: Spartacus, 2006), p. 31.

⁴⁶ Ives, pp. 82-83.

Lo Stato moderno sostituisce al blocco meccanico dei gruppi sociali una loro subordinazione all'egemonia attiva del gruppo dirigente e dominante, quindi abolisce alcune autonomie, che però rinascono in altra forma, come partiti, sindacati, associazioni di cultura.⁴⁷

The modern State substitutes for the mechanical bloc of social groups their subordination to the active hegemony of the directive and dominant group, hence [it] abolishes certain autonomies, which nevertheless are reborn in other forms, as parties, trade unions, cultural associations.⁴⁸

This was especially evident during the Fascist era in Italy, when the state also outlawed or took control of these outlets for the expression of subaltern cultures, philosophies and world-views, referred to by Gramsci elsewhere as '*forme di vita interna delle classi subalterne*' (forms of the subaltern classes' internal life).⁴⁹ Marcus Green claims that what Gramsci would have liked to see ideally was a post-subaltern state breaking with the past rule of one group over others, which could be achieved by a coalition of subaltern forces acting from below.⁵⁰ In terms of language policy, this would imply language activism.

Dialects have already been defined (see 1.4 above) as linguistic varieties that have an identity based around their subordinate status *vis-à-vis* a specific language. They are, therefore, closely bound to the notion of subalternity, which is in turn linked to peripherality: at the least, this is a social form of peripherality, but often also spatial. Other regional or minority languages may also be associated with subaltern or marginalised groups, but the very categorisation of certain linguistic varieties as dialects inherently identifies them as subaltern. Another Gramscian concept closely linked to subalternity is *spontaneity*, which allows for especially strong connections to be drawn between the

⁴⁷ Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, III, p. 2287.

⁴⁸ Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p. 54.

⁴⁹ Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, I, p. 303.

⁵⁰ Marcus Green, 'Gramsci Cannot Speak: Presentations and Interpretations of Gramsci's Concept of the Subaltern', *Rethinking Marxism*, 14.3 (2002), 1-24 (p. 22).

hegemony and subalternity opposition and the categorisation of languages and dialects, as will be seen in the following sub-section.

2.2.4 Spontaneity

Gramsci put forward that the very structures of language could act as effective metaphors for hegemony. This is exemplified by the 'two grammars of hegemony': Gramsci's 'dialectical understanding of [...] spontaneous grammar with normative grammar reveals one of the fundamental dynamics of hegemony'.⁵¹ *Spontaneous* or *immanent grammar* could be seen as unconscious, 'natural' grammar; the internal rules that every person follows. Spontaneous grammar does, however, need to be disciplined, otherwise comprehension would be severely impaired. This discipline is provided by *normative grammar*, which is essentially the ensemble of conscious rules used to 'speak correctly'.⁵²

Gramsci described grammar with the metaphor of a photograph: language frozen in time.⁵³ Ferdinand de Saussure saw the purpose of such a photograph as recording a moment in time of language, but Gramsci would prefer to use it to both understand and change the world. While Gramsci would have agreed with Saussure that, in order to use a language, speakers do not need to know its historical background, he believed that ignorance of the historical development of languages can mask the power relations at work. Subaltern classes are particularly prone to forgetting the 'historical process of metaphor' that leads to the development of the meaning of individual words and of language as a whole.⁵⁴ Gramsci notes this trend also in terms of a more general sense of historical worth.

⁵¹ Ives, p. 90.

⁵² Ibid., pp.91-92

⁵³ Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, III, p. 2341.

⁵⁴ Ives, pp.94-95.

Si può dire che l'elemento della spontaneità è [...] caratteristico della 'storia delle classi subalterne' e anzi degli elementi più marginali e periferici di queste classi, che non hanno raggiunto la coscienza della classe 'per sé' e che perciò non sospettano neanche che la loro storia possa avere una qualsiasi importanza e che abbia un qualsiasi valore lasciarne tracce documentarie.⁵⁵

It may be said that spontaneity is [...] characteristic of the 'history of the subaltern classes', and indeed of their most marginal and peripheral elements; these have not yet achieved any consciousness of the class 'for itself', and consequently it never occurs to them that their history might have some possible importance, and that there might be some value in leaving documentary evidence of it.⁵⁶

Unlike Benedetto Croce or Saussure, Gramsci did not believe the creation of normative grammars to be the product of nature or logic, but rather of the conscious selection and organisation of spontaneous grammars.⁵⁷ Spontaneous grammars, on the other hand, are the product of the 'interaction of previous normative grammars that have been internalized'.⁵⁸ Explaining the process by which normative grammars are internalised and become spontaneous grammars in the course of language acquisition, Gramsci noted that, if a normative grammar is not taught at school:

in realtà, si esclude dall'apprendimento della lingua colta la massa popolare nazionale, poiché il ceto dirigente più alto, che tradizionalmente parla in 'lingua', trasmette di generazione in generazione, attraverso un processo lento che incomincia coi primi balbettamenti del bambino sotto la guida dei genitori, e continua nella conversazione (coi suoi 'si dice così', 'deve dirsi così', ecc.) per tutta la vita: in realtà la grammatica si studia 'sempre', ecc. (con l'imitazione dei modelli ammirati, ecc.).⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, I, p. 328.

⁵⁶ Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p. 196.

⁵⁷ Ives, p. 96.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 98.

⁵⁹ Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, III, p. 2349.

In practice the national-popular mass is excluded from learning the educated language, since the highest level of the ruling class, which traditionally speaks standard Italian ['language'], passes it on from generation to generation, through a slow process that begins with the first stutterings of the child under the guidance of its parents, and continues through conversation (with its 'this is how one says it', 'it must be said like this', etc.) for the rest of one's life. In reality, one is 'always' studying grammar (by imitating the model one admires, etc.).⁶⁰

As a result, it is clear that Gramsci can see the notion of unadulterated spontaneity in a negative sense, as the ruling classes continue to elaborate a linguistic norm. However, he also sees it as an essential part of child development, as evidenced in a letter from prison in which he wrote that, while it is important to teach a child good manners, this should be done '*senza mortificare la sua spontaneità*' (without killing [the child's] spontaneity).⁶¹

Dialects, as inherently subaltern linguistic varieties, could then inhabit the spontaneous end of Gramsci's spectrum of grammars. For many dialects, the normative grammar is not written, and in a diglossic situation where dialects constitute the 'low' variety, this is frequently tied to their lack of use as written languages, and to their existence as primarily oral forms of communication. Oral cultures, often transmitted through the medium of dialects, are frequently portrayed as folklore, which Gramsci situates as subaltern to 'official' culture, the hegemonic world-view. Alberto Cirese notes, however, how Gramsci recognises the validity of folklore insomuch that it is able to relate spontaneously to the real conditions of life and that it makes up a '*filosofia spontanea*' (spontaneous philosophy).⁶²

⁶⁰ Gramsci, *Selections from Cultural Writings*, p. 187.

⁶¹ Antonio Gramsci, *Lettere dal carcere*, ed. by Sergio Caprioglio and Elsa Fubini (Turin: Einaudi, 1965), p. 431.

⁶² Alberto M. Cirese, 'Concezioni del mondo, filosofia spontanea, folklore', in *Gramsci e la cultura contemporanea: Atti del Convegno internazionale di studi gramsciani tenuto a Cagliari il 23-*

The fact that dialects are in many cases the first languages of the home and of the family also means that they exert a strong influence on the spontaneous or immanent grammar of those who speak them. This can cause difficulties for those whose spontaneous grammars, formed by home-based normative grammars, differ significantly from a normative grammar they may be expected to learn at school. This has indeed been the case for generations of school pupils in many parts of Italy, although the spread of standard and regional Italian as a language, first heard in many homes on the radio and on television, and now spoken in most homes as well, has gone some way to bridge this gap for many Italians (see Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 below). In Norway, meanwhile, the long-standing official educational recognition of the immanent correctness of every individual's spoken spontaneous grammar has meant that educators are not permitted to correct the spoken grammatical patterns a child has learnt at home (see 5.7-5.8 below). Furthermore, the formulation of Nynorsk, a standard written language based on a common denominator of all Norwegian dialects, is a solution that minimises the average distance between spontaneous and home- or local-normative grammar on one side and nation- or state-normative grammar on the other. The Samnorsk trend, furthermore, has done much to ensure greater equality throughout Norway in terms of this average distance, or spontaneous/normative gap, as it could be called.

Beyond any educational pressure to conform to a linguistic norm, there is also frequently an intense social pressure.

Un contadino che si inurba, per la pressione dell'ambiente
cittadino, finisce col conformarsi alla parlata della città; le classi

27 aprile 1967, ed. by Pietro Rossi, 2 vols (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1969), II, pp. 299-328 (p. 312, p. 324).

subalterne cercano di parlare come le classi dominanti e gli intellettuali, ecc.⁶³

A peasant who moves to the city ends up conforming to urban speech through the pressure of the city environment. In the country, people try to imitate urban speech; the subaltern classes try to speak like the dominant classes and the intellectuals, etc.⁶⁴

This spontaneous conformism is unavoidable, but the campaigns to be detailed in Chapter 4 and Chapter 6 below have attempted to eliminate stages of this conformism through moves intended to afford greater prestige to dialects. The Lega Nord has had some, currently limited success in this project, although their campaign is ongoing, while the Nynorsk movement has achieved major, and apparently lasting success at a national level.

2.3 **Rokkan**

Thus far, the Gramscian model detailed above has offered a mainly socio-cultural dimension to the analysis of the politics of language. Structures of hegemony and subalternity are, however, also strongly conditioned by economy and territory, as Gramsci recognised in his metaphorical use of 'wars of position' (see 2.2.2 above). Social, political and spatial structures are all intertwined and, in particular, the notion of subalternity is often strongly associated with peripherality. Like the Sardinian Antonio Gramsci, Stein Rokkan also spent his early years living in a peripheral region – in his case, northern Norway – and the two both demonstrated a great interest in the nature and problems of peripheries, although their ideas found different forms of expression. Rokkan's academic work was not overtly politically charged and belonged more to political science than to political philosophy, but a certain system of values did lie behind his studies and is evident throughout:

⁶³ Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, III, pp. 2342-2343.

⁶⁴ Gramsci, *Selections from Cultural Writings*, pp. 180-181.

I am a polyglot and a pluralist. I want to protect the peripheral languages but I do not want to confine people to one single language. I am against cultural serfdom. I consider it a basic human right to be given opportunities to acquire languages other than the local one: this will allow some measure of choice for the citizen as he plans his life. [...] I value a commitment based on active choice much higher than one passively accepted.⁶⁵

This pluralist stance establishes Rokkan as a firm supporter of counter-hegemony, in that he supports the subaltern or peripheral and is opposed to linguistic domination. His commitment to 'active choice' also echoes Gramsci's criticisms of 'passive revolution' (see 2.2.2 above).

In comparative studies of western European territories, Rokkan sought to devise schematic ways of understanding historical political development (state formation, nation-building and mass politics) through the configuration of centres and peripheries and the composition of cleavage structures. Rokkan continuously reworked and revisited his models, with the latest grouped version of his theories known as the 'conceptual map of Europe'. This scheme combined variables of economy, territory and culture to reveal how the differences in modern European political structures have their roots in historical territorial organisation.⁶⁶ Significantly, this model, like Rokkan's models in general, addressed the situations of nations both large and small.

Both Gramsci's and Rokkan's works are unfinished. Gramsci's notebooks make up fragmentary, unfinished working plans for future texts that he never lived to write. The last

⁶⁵ Stein Rokkan, 'Memorandum to the members of the ETI group', 7 February 1979, cited in Erik Allardt and Henry Valen, 'Stein Rokkan: An Intellectual Profile', in *Mobilization, Center-Periphery Structures and Nation-Building: A Volume in Commemoration of Stein Rokkan*, ed. by Per Torsvik (Bergen: Universitetsforlaget, 1981), pp. 11-38 (p. 36).

⁶⁶ Stein Rokkan, *State Formation, Nation-Building, and Mass Politics in Europe: The Theory of Stein Rokkan – Based on His Collected Works*, ed. by Peter Flora and others (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 135-147.

major project with which Rokkan was involved was not completed until after his death.⁶⁷ Furthermore, the models that Rokkan developed are general and open, not providing clear causal hypotheses but instead acting as a tool for researchers to use in order to uncover the dynamics of various political situations. Although Rokkan described the most significant factors for political variation, he did not delve into analysis of the underlying conflicts themselves.⁶⁸ The resulting openness of Rokkan's models makes it possible to adopt them 'to view widely divergent cases in a similar perspective'.⁶⁹ It is with this intention that the centre-periphery and cleavage structure models will be detailed here.

2.3.1 Centres and peripheries

It is essential to consider the concept of territory when observing variations within political systems. To examine the way such systems interact with territorial space, the centre-periphery dichotomy is fundamental.

A centre is a place from which the majority of political, cultural and/or economic resources are controlled. Rokkan indicates that a centre can be identified by the presence of 'arenas for deliberations, negotiations, [and] decision-making' and of 'monuments'. These may include military-administrative institutions such as ministries, parliaments or courts, economic institutions such as banks, stock exchanges or large commercial head offices, and cultural institutions such as universities, theatres, or the seats of high-ranking clerics.⁷⁰

Alternatively, a centre could be a place with a particularly high concentration of

⁶⁷ Stein Rokkan and Derek W. Urwin, *Economy, Territory, Identity: Politics of West European Peripheries* (London: Sage Publications, 1983).

⁶⁸ Erik Allardt, 'Reflections on Stein Rokkan's Conceptual Map of Europe', *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 4 (1981), 257-271 (p. 270).

⁶⁹ Allardt and Valen, p. 34.

⁷⁰ Stein Rokkan and others, *Centre-Periphery Structures in Europe: An ISSC Workbook in Comparative Analysis* (Frankfurt: Campus, 1987), pp. 25-26.

communication flows, a place 'where the largest proportion of economically active are engaged in the processing and communication of information and instructions over long distances'.⁷¹ A centre holds sway over a surrounding region, although it also relies on its region for what it can provide in terms of resources, a workforce, leisure facilities and security.⁷²

A periphery, on the other hand, is distinguished from a centre by distance, dependence and difference.⁷³ *Distance* is, of course, essential to a territorial category such as this, but the importance of distance varies according to various factors. Rokkan puts forward that the nature of 'transactions over distances' will depend on a number of conditions: the *physical* conditions or constraints on communication, the *technological* opportunities for communication, the state of *military* power, the *economic* situation, and the *cultural* circumstances, which could include 'ethnic affinities or enmities, differences in language, in moral codes, [or] in religion'.⁷⁴ The *dependence* of a periphery on a given centre is connected to what is available in the centre in terms of political, economic and cultural infrastructure and capital. *Difference* is 'to some extent a function of distances and dependence', but peripheries will usually have at least some level of separate identity.⁷⁵

There are both horizontal and vertical dimensions of peripherality: the horizontal dimension is primarily concerned with physical or territorial distance, whereas the vertical dimension concerns differences in decision-making power.⁷⁶ The vertical dimension implies

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 26.

⁷² Ibid., p. 30.

⁷³ Rokkan and Urwin, p. 3.

⁷⁴ Stein Rokkan, 'Cities, States, Nations: A Dimensional Model for the Study of Contrasts in Development', in *Building States and Nations*, ed. by S. N. Eisenstadt and Stein Rokkan, 2 vols (London: Sage Publications, 1973), I, pp. 73-97 (p. 74).

⁷⁵ Rokkan and Urwin, p. 3.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

that a periphery could also be understood metaphorically in a non-territorial sense, for example a social periphery living in a territorial centre. In many cases, however, a socially defined peripheral group may also be found inhabiting a peripheral space, including a peripheral district within a city. That the new inner-city peripheries of post-industrial cities can be demoted from 'centre' status in such a short time is testament to the fragile nature of economically defined centres, as well as to the artificial nature of all kinds of centres.

A periphery is, then, in a position of subalternity with respect to the hegemony of the centre. These territorial models can easily be applied to modern-day Norway and Italy. In Norway, the south-east, centred on the Oslo Fjord, is very clearly the major centre, with a very high concentration of the population as well as cultural and economic capital, and the rest of Norway makes for a very large periphery. Around the country, there are also smaller regional centres such as Bergen, Trondheim and Tromsø. Bergen and Trondheim each enjoy a certain historical prestige. Bergen was a former trading centre of the Hanseatic League, and Trondheim is famed as the place of devotion to St Olav and historic seat of the Archdiocese of Nidaros, which once extended to parts of the British and Irish Isles. It was also Norway's first capital city and Nidaros Cathedral is an important site of national identity as the place where Norwegian monarchs receive their benediction. Indeed, one defining feature of centres can be the existence of monuments and their use for identity-affirming ceremonies.⁷⁷ These regional centres all have their own co-dependent peripheries, with Tromsø's extending to the whole of northern Norway. Furthermore, most if not all of Norway could be considered part of the northern periphery of Europe. Although Norway has recently become a highly prosperous nation and an economic centre, it remains situated in the

⁷⁷ Rokkan and others, *Centre-Periphery Structures in Europe*, p. 25.

territorial periphery of Europe with a sparse population, scoring high on the distance dimension of peripherality.

Southern and insular Italy, too, could be considered to be located in Europe's territorial periphery. In terms of centres, Italy is what Rokkan called a 'polycephalic structure', with a 'marked dispersion of the different types of arenas across several regions'.⁷⁸ Rome, in the geographical centre of the country, is also the prime political-administrative centre, but Milan could be deemed to be the economic centre, with the stock exchange and many financial institutions, as well as a highly developed industrial infrastructure. Much of the Italian political élite also comes from northern Italy. Beyond Milan, many other northern cities are also centres of industry, and the 'industrial triangle' of Milan, Turin and Genoa is situated in the most prosperous part of Europe: the so-called 'hot banana' core macro-region, which is generally perceived to curve from south-eastern England through the low countries, south-western Germany and Switzerland to Liguria. Italy is also studded with cultural centres that are not merely of national significance but are global centres of culture, such as Rome and Florence; Florence also being the historic linguistic centre of Italy (see Chapter 3 below).

There are also major cultural centres in the southern periphery, such as Naples, and centres of communication or transport such as Bari. Conversely, peripheries can be found in the northern core. Some of the regions commonly seen as peripheral, such as the hinterland of Milan, are perhaps better seen as 'nodal regions',⁷⁹ a contiguous economic and, to some extent, cultural region with common attributes that diminish proportionately with respect to the distance from the centre. Other peripheral regions of northern Italy could be defined as

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 26.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 30.

'interface peripheries', deriving their peripheral nature from being 'caught in the cross-fire between two dominant centres', or near the national border.⁸⁰ Some peripheral regions in mountainous Alpine or pre-Alpine areas have been able to maintain their distinctiveness largely due to their geographical locations. This includes a number of linguistic minorities such as the Alemannic dialect-speaking Walser populations in the Aosta Valley and in Piedmont, and the Ladin speakers of Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtirol and Veneto.

In spite of the factors detailed above that point to the centrality of northern Italy, the Lega Nord has persistently claimed that northern Italy is a periphery. This ties in strongly with the party's portrayal of Rome as a greedy and corrupt centre of power (see 4.4 below). The Lega's 'ideologue', Gianfranco Miglio, has also painted a picture of Lombardy in particular as a stranger to power:

[...] il 'filo rosso' conduttore della storia dei lombardi è la tendenza di questi a lasciare ad altri l'esercizio del potere, per concentrarsi sull'attività economica e, se mai, condizionare da questa sede chi il potere detiene. Soltanto accettando un tale punto di vista si può capire perché mai, da quando fanno parte dello Stato nazionale, i lombardi non abbiano generato alcun uomo politico di prima grandezza. Si sono fermati agli Zanardelli e ai Vanoni, mentre i veri statisti della storia italiana sono in genere piemontesi o figli delle regioni centromeridionali. Il lombardo è rimasto sempre e orgogliosamente un 'lombard': per eccellenza un uomo d'affari.⁸¹

[...] the 'golden thread' guiding the history of the Lombards is their tendency to leave the exercise of power to others, in order to concentrate on economic activity and, if anything, to influence whoever is in power that way. Only by accepting such a point of view can you understand why, since they became part of the nation State [sic], the Lombards have not produced a single politician of the first magnitude. They stopped with [Giuseppe] Zanardelli [Italian prime minister, 1901-1903] and [Ezio] Vanoni [government minister in various roles between 1948 and 1956], while the real statesmen of Italian history are generally

⁸⁰ Rokkan and Urwin, p. 28.

⁸¹ Miglio, pp. 89-90.

Piedmontese or from the regions of the centre-south. The Lombard has always remained proudly a '*lombard*': a businessman *par excellence*.

Miglio refers to the political power of the 'centre-south', but he seemingly neglects that capital is also power, making Lombardy a major centre at a European level. Although Miglio claims that Lombards have tended to shy away from political power, his comment above dates from 1994, the same year Berlusconi first came to power: a Lombard businessman *par excellence*, and Italy's longest-serving prime minister since Mussolini.

2.3.2 Cultural cleavage structures

The centre-periphery relationship is also termed by Rokkan as a 'cleavage'. As well as a political cleavage, the centre-periphery polarity also forms an economic and cultural cleavage.

The Nynorsk movement is surely the clearest evidence of that cultural cleavage between centre and periphery in Norway, as Rokkan demonstrated in his own model of the Norwegian cleavage system (see figure 2.1).

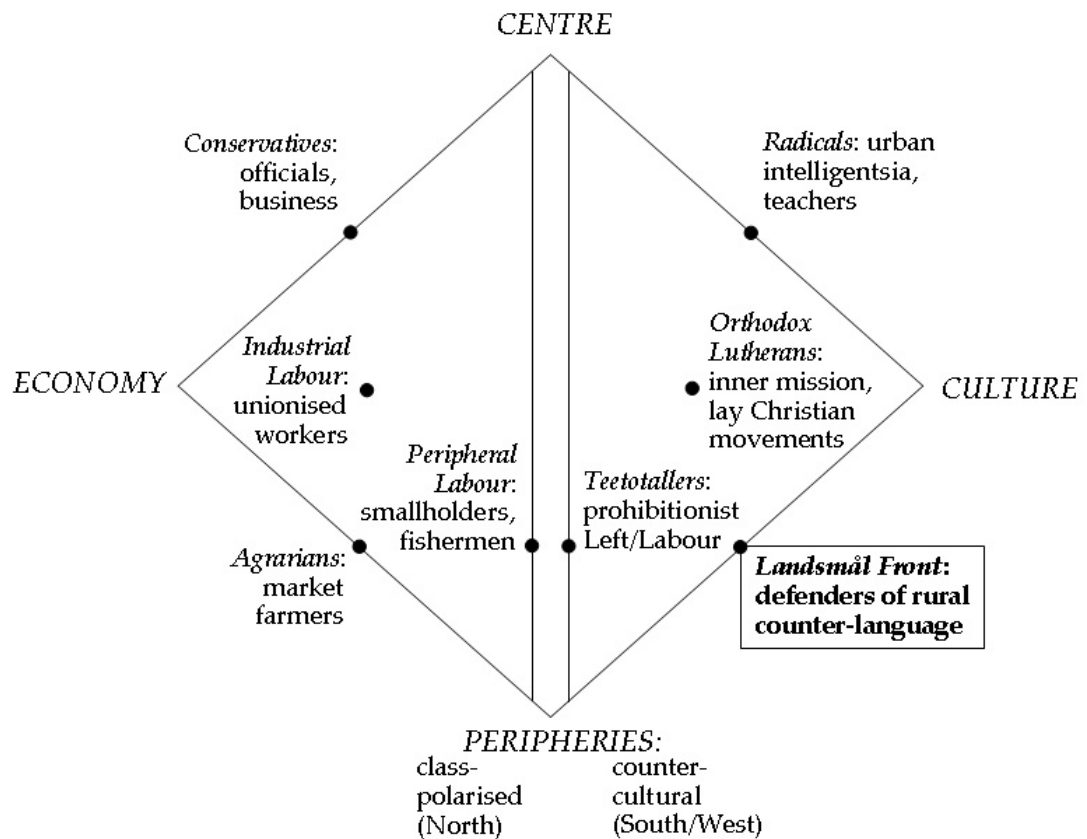


Figure 2.1 'A model of the Norwegian cleavage system' (after Henry Valen and Stein Rokkan, 'Norway: Conflict Structure and Mass Politics in a European Periphery', in *Electoral Behavior: A Comparative Handbook*, ed. by Richard Rose (New York: Free Press, 1974), pp. 315-370 (p. 319)). Note the position of the 'Landsmål Front' (highlighted and outlined) as a cultural bulwark of the periphery.

The original cleavages in Norway were territorial and cultural, namely the cleavages depicted on the right-hand side of the figure above, and the functional-economic cleavages, on the left-hand side, developed later, intersecting with the existing cleavages and creating a more complex network.⁸² Cleavages manifest themselves most evidently at what Rokkan calls 'critical junctures'.⁸³ The cultural form of cleavage is primarily a product of the 'National Revolution', while the conflicts brought about by economic cleavages – landed

⁸² Allardt and Valen, pp. 24-25.

⁸³ Rokkan, *State Formation, Nation-Building, and Mass Politics in Europe*, pp. 303-319.

interests vs. industrial entrepreneurs and owners/employers vs. workers/tenants – were the product of the Industrial Revolution.⁸⁴

The 'Landsmål Front' (or Nynorsk movement) occupies a key strategic position in the Norwegian cleavage system as portrayed in the figure above, sitting between culture and the peripheries. The cleavage between centre and periphery linguistic culture at the end of the nineteenth century was so strong, in fact, that some supporters of the periphery language (Landsmål, later to be known as Nynorsk) even believed that the split represented the existence of two 'nations' in Norway, one more Norwegian than the other (see 5.7 below). The Nynorsk movement is also frequently allied to the other cleavages along the same latitude in the figure above: teetotalers, peripheral labour and agrarians. The Samnorsk project of Arbeidarpartiet (the Norwegian Labour Party) sought to ally this peripheral stratum, especially the agrarians, with industrial labour, closer to the centre, by creating a third written standard to straddle the centre-periphery gap (see 5.9 below). The conservative standard of Norwegian (Riksmål, later Bokmål) found its early allies among the radicals, the cultural centre, and among conservatives representing the economic centre (see the role of Høyre, the Conservative Party, in Chapter 5 below).

The co-ordinates of Rokkan's model of cleavage structures align remarkably well with political party systems.⁸⁵ Lipset and Rokkan argue that parties emerge to mobilise certain sectors of the population, defined by cleavages.

In our Western democracies the voters are only rarely called upon to express their stands on single issues. They are typically faced

⁸⁴ Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan, 'Cleavage Structures, Party Systems, and Voter Alignments: An Introduction', in *Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross-National Perspectives*, ed. by Seymour M. Lipset and Stein Rokkan (New York: Free Press, 1967), pp. 1-64 (p. 14).

⁸⁵ Allardt, p. 260.

with choices among historically given 'packages' of programs, commitments, outlooks, and, sometimes, *Weltanschauungen*, and their current behaviour cannot be understood without some knowledge of the sequences of events and the combinations of forces that produced these 'packages'.⁸⁶

In voting terms, these packages are offered by political parties. Far from being surprise packages, they are carefully selected to address underlying cultural cleavages. In terms of language policy, language activist organisations or coalitions can offer packages of language ideology, which may also be bundled with other non-linguistic ideological content. This will be demonstrated with the cases of both the Lega Nord and the Nynorsk movement, both of which ally their language policies with broader counter-hegemonic, periphery-vs.-centre goals. The Lega, as a political party, also weaves language ideology into a patchwork of other policies intended to defend what it sees as a northern periphery.

2.4 Combining Gramscian and Rokkanian approaches in linguistics

Gramscian and Rokkanian approaches have previously been combined in other linguistic studies, but this thesis is intended to refresh this highly rewarding theoretical pairing through particular comparative case studies drawn from Gramsci's and Rokkan's own native countries.

In the Italian context, Gramsci's own conclusions about the language question in his own time have provided a frequently tapped source for historians of language, but there have been few attempts since Pasolini's in the mid-1960s (see Chapter 4 below) to extend or apply Gramsci's ideas to the sociolinguistic situation of Italy today. One notable exception is found in a recent book chapter by Alessandro Carlucci, in which he considers the relatively

⁸⁶ Lipset and Rokkan, pp. 2-3.

low level of foreign language skills in Italy as a possible result of societal division.⁸⁷ Carlucci wonders if the emergence of a restricted cosmopolitan élite composed of those who have advanced knowledge of the English language could represent a passive revolution, modernising markets without leading to any intellectual progress, especially not for the population at large.

While relatively little linguistic research in Scandinavia has explicitly employed Gramscian theory, Gramsci's elaboration of cultural hegemony has previously been applied by Stephen Walton to analyse Ivar Aasen's response to National Romanticism (see Chapter 5 below).⁸⁸ It was this response that resulted in Aasen's formulation of Nynorsk, the co-official written standard of Norwegian that he based on Norwegian dialects. The counter-hegemonic application of language and cultural policy by political élites in the Norwegian context has been discussed by Gregg Bucken-Knapp, particularly in connection with the promotion of Samnorsk by Arbeidarpartiet (see also Chapter 5 below).⁸⁹ Bucken-Knapp also employed Rokkanian concepts of centre and periphery to explain why the distinctiveness of peripheral cultures in Norway made them attractive options for mobilisation by political élites.⁹⁰ The present study will take the analyses of Walton and Bucken-Knapp further to reveal how the counter-hegemonic foundation of Nynorsk has been appreciated by cultural and political movements in the latter decades of the twentieth century. The extended

⁸⁷ Alessandro Carlucci, 'Grammatica, educazione linguistica, passività. Un aspetto attuale del pensiero e dell'attività di Antonio Gramsci', in *La lingua/le lingue di Gramsci e delle sue opere: Scrittura, riscritture, letture in Italia e nel mondo*, ed. by Fiamma Lussana and Giulia Pissarello (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2008), pp. 101-109 (pp. 107-109).

⁸⁸ Stephen J. Walton, *Farewell the Spirit Craven: Ivar Aasen and National Romanticism* (Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget, 1987).

⁸⁹ Gregg Bucken-Knapp, *Elites, Language, and the Politics of Identity: The Norwegian Case in Comparative Perspective* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003).

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 33-34.

comparison of two different sociolinguistic contexts, together with the theoretical exposition above, will also serve to expand the Gramscian-Rokkanian language model.

One previous linguistic application of Gramscian and Rokkanian theory, albeit with only brief references to Gramsci and with no direct mention of Rokkan, is Robert Phillipson's critique of the global spread of the English language as imperialism, which generated much debate among applied linguists. Many of those engaged in the organisation or the delivering of English language teaching in post-colonial contexts have claimed that their work is non-political but, as Phillipson reminds us, this depends 'on how the concept "political" itself is understood'.⁹¹ The work of organisations such as the British Council or educational foundations originally set up by industrialists including Ford, Carnegie and Rockefeller may be explicitly defined by those organisations themselves as non-political, and intended as non-political action, but this 'assumes that educational concerns can be divorced from social, political, and economic realities'.⁹² Indeed, the values that lie behind the post-1945 surge in English language teaching in much of the world are generally perceived to be common sense, but that is 'only in the Gramscian sense of being based on beliefs which reflect the dominant ideology'.⁹³ They are in other words hegemonic ideologies. As a result, Phillipson puts forward that organisations operating between states such as those listed above, and other 'inter-state actors' including individuals who conduct their lives at an international level, are a key part of English linguistic imperialism, and that the expansion of English language teaching is also directly due to assistance from state actors.⁹⁴ After all, the

⁹¹ Robert Phillipson, *Linguistic Imperialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 65.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 67.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 309-310.

promotion of English language skills and an Anglophone world-view is favourable to the foreign policy interests of English-speaking countries.

Furthermore, Phillipson elaborates the concept of *linguicism*: 'ideologies, structures, and practices which are used to legitimate, effectuate, and reproduce an unequal distribution of power and resources [...] between groups which are defined on the basis of language'.⁹⁵ Linguicism, then, stands out as remarkably similar to the 'malady' form of schizoglossia (see 1.4 above). Particular teaching methodologies or, for example, the sometimes evident preference for non-local teachers could contribute to the development of linguicist ideas. It is through the language choices forced or encouraged by linguicist or schizoglossic notions, which in other contexts could even include the mere labelling of a linguistic variety as a dialect, that linguistic hegemonies are maintained.

Phillipson reached his conclusions through a theoretical framework which combined notions of hegemony and the centre-periphery dichotomy, as this present thesis will also do in its attempt to compare Italy and Norway. For some, gross domestic product could be the most significant factor when examining the centre-periphery dichotomy, and Phillipson's use of '[t]he core-periphery metaphor is inspired by [its adoption] in analyses of the relationship between the dominant rich countries and the dominated poor ones'.⁹⁶ The situation is more complex than this, however, and it becomes clear that the distinction, for Phillipson, mainly concerns countries in which the majority of the population speak English as a native language (the 'centre'), and those in which English has either been introduced as a means of international communication, as in Scandinavia or much of Europe, or where English was imposed as a result of colonisation, such as in India or Nigeria (the

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 47.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 17.

'periphery').⁹⁷ The 'periphery-English' countries can therefore include many economically rich countries, but also countries where, even if the majority of the population do not speak English as a native language, a very large number of people do. The native vs. non-native distinction is perhaps becoming gradually less important with the development of 'world Englishes' and the entrenchment of post-colonial élites.

Phillipson's theoretical grounding in centre-periphery relations is based not on Rokkan, but on the work of Norwegian peace researcher Johan Galtung, which was, however, itself primarily an application of Rokkan's model to an exploration of imperialism. Galtung sought to describe different forms of imperialism, namely economic, political, military, communicative, cultural and social. The cultural dimension includes the sub-forms of scientific, media and education imperialism.⁹⁸ Phillipson adds linguistic imperialism to these elements of cultural imperialism, but he also sees this new category as operating in tandem with and throughout all kinds of imperialism, as language is a 'means used to mediate and express' imperialism.⁹⁹ Galtung also categorised different parts of the world into centre and periphery territories, in which the centre territories are the rich, dominant western countries, with the periphery made up of developing countries.

As Phillipson rightly reiterates, however, there should be many layers to this division:

There are centres of power in the Centre and in the Periphery. The Peripheries in both the Centre and the Periphery are exploited by their respective Centres. Elites in the Centres of both the Centre and the Periphery are linked by shared interests [...] and, it is claimed here, by language.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Johan Galtung, *The True Worlds: A Transnational Perspective* (New York: Free Press, 1980).

⁹⁹ Phillipson, *Linguistic Imperialism*, p. 65.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 52.

So Phillipson does realise the multi-layered nature of a centre-periphery structure, noting elsewhere that the 'key actors' for the legitimisation of imperialistic language policies in the periphery-English countries are "'experts" from the North and elites in the South'.¹⁰¹ Still, Galtung's and Phillipson's categorisations of the world's 'North' and 'South' do risk banding together all of the 'North' as an almost monolithic centre and the 'South' as a homogeneous periphery, while the situation is actually more complicated. Phillipson himself cites Edward Said's critique of Orientalism as 'inspiration' for his analysis of the values that lie embedded in English language teaching.¹⁰² Said's study demonstrated how those outside the Orient held prejudiced hegemonic notions of what the Orient represented based on the Orient as the 'Other'.¹⁰³ This view of 'Others' ties in well with Phillipson's criticism of Anglocentrism and English linguistic imperialism, but the simplification of what are really stratified societies into clear-cut categories of 'North' and 'South' (or indeed 'West' and 'East') could lead to the creation of false oppositions.

Such simplifications may be difficult to avoid when studying international, globalising linguistic hegemonies or linguistic imperialism. If the international dimension is considered in isolation, however, this obscures the national and sub-national forms of linguistic hegemonies and other tensions that exist within the 'centres' and 'peripheries' as defined by Phillipson. Cultural imperialism is not only a matter of global languages putting pressure on local languages; imperialism can exist within countries. The minority languages in the peripheries of the United Kingdom have, for example, been subject to linguisticism emanating from the UK's centres, but so have the working class sociolects of such major

¹⁰¹ Robert Phillipson, 'Realities and Myths of Linguistic Imperialism', *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 18 (1997), 238-247 (p. 240).

¹⁰² Phillipson, *Linguistic Imperialism*, p. 75.

¹⁰³ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London, Routledge and K. Paul, 1978).

centres as London. As a result, there is the danger of losing sight of the fact that '[n]ot all speakers in the West dominate, nor are all speakers in the periphery discriminated against'.¹⁰⁴

Indeed, Holborow criticises Phillipson's centre-periphery model for failing 'to explain how national states are themselves enmeshed in global capitalism'.¹⁰⁵

Phillipson's centre-periphery, north-south categorization, furthermore, locks him into an anti-imperialist strategy of nationalism and the promotion of national language. Yet, nationalism does not necessarily mark a break with the imperialist order. Indeed, as a matter of historical record, it has been only too happy, under new leaders, to fit into the world order it once opposed.¹⁰⁶

Holborow cites examples from post-colonial Africa where local élites have contributed to continuing poverty for the masses, and also the case of Ireland, where official support for the Irish language has gone on throughout an 'enthusiastic embracing of high-tech capitalism and the toleration of widening social division'.¹⁰⁷

Phillipson's *Linguistic Imperialism* has also been criticised by Alan Davies, who highlights the book's 'two cultures': one of 'guilt' about imperialism – linguistic and otherwise – and one of 'romantic despair', which Davies likens to the theme of environmentalism.¹⁰⁸ Furthermore, Davies claims to see conspiracy theorising throughout Phillipson's work, especially in his analysis of the origins of what was then the University of

¹⁰⁴ Marnie Holborow, *The Politics of English: A Marxist View of Language* (London: Sage Publications, 1999), p. 78.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ Alan Davies, 'Ironising the Myth of Linguicism', *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 17 (1996), 485-496 (p. 485).

Edinburgh's Department of Applied Linguistics.¹⁰⁹ This was established in 1957 with strong support from the British Council, and saw its main task as developing theoretical foundations for the teaching of English as a foreign language, although Phillipson queries the reasons behind the adoption of such an apparently broadly defined name for an institute that was initially concerned primarily with language pedagogy.¹¹⁰ A proper understanding of hegemony, however, guards against conspiracy theorising, as Phillipson himself noted: 'hegemony does not imply a conspiracy theory, but a competing and complementary set of values and practices, with those in power better able to legitimate themselves and to convert their ideas into material power'.¹¹¹

In another response to Phillipson, Davies explains a point on which he claims they disagree:

We disagree about the choices people make about their language use. For [Phillipson] such choices are typically imposed externally. For me they are typically decisions made by individuals. I prefer to view people as independent beings, capable of acting in their own best interests with regard to language use. [Phillipson] sees that as hegemonic, to which, of course, I have no reply since hegemony takes no prisoners.¹¹²

Indeed, it would be patronising to think that such choices cannot be made independently by individuals, especially if such a generalisation were made about post-colonial contexts and not extended to the rest of the world. At its most extreme, it would suggest that 'only those belonging to the Centre are fully human agents with rationality and free will'.¹¹³ The point, however, is not that choices are imposed externally, but rather that hegemonic ways of

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 490.

¹¹⁰ Phillipson, *Linguistic Imperialism*, pp. 174-176.

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 74.

¹¹² Alan Davies, 'Response to a Reply', *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 18 (1997), 248.

¹¹³ Joseph, *Language and Politics*, p. 53.

thinking can become internalised and begin to appear as common sense. Furthermore, the stratified nature of centres and peripheries implies that centre-speakers are also subject, or perhaps especially subject, to the influence of linguistic hegemonies, establishing their 'commonsensical' language ideologies.

In a reply to Davies's first critique, Phillipson reaffirms that hegemony in its Gramscian sense is usually understood as non-coercive, 'involving a battle for hearts and minds', and that it does not imply that resistance is futile.¹¹⁴ As will be seen in the coming chapters, counter-hegemonic movements can indeed achieve many successes if they reach a critical mass, including through coalition-building or if their proponents achieve positions of political power. This can happen in the wake of what Gramsci calls a '*crisi di egemonia*' (crisis of hegemony).¹¹⁵ But it is important to stress that, as Phillipson explains with reference to the spread of English in western Europe through other means than English language teaching (see also 1.3 above on the cultural cachet of English), linguistic hegemony does not always equate to linguistic imperialism.¹¹⁶

Phillipson justly reiterates:

It is important to recall that the 'Centre' and 'Periphery' concepts are rich metaphors for a rich variety of lived experience. They are a convenient form of shorthand which appropriately reflects the power relationships in force, and should not be interpreted as underplaying the diversity and specificity of each individual context.¹¹⁷

It is possible, however, to use the shorthand of centres and peripheries without losing sight of their complex nature. A note by Gramsci on folklore, which he sees as the world-view of

¹¹⁴ Phillipson, 'Realities and Myths of Linguistic Imperialism', p. 242.

¹¹⁵ Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, III, p. 1603.

¹¹⁶ Phillipson, 'Realities and Myths of Linguistic Imperialism', p. 242.

¹¹⁷ Phillipson, *Linguistic Imperialism*, p. 309.

subaltern classes, demonstrates one way of interpreting the composition of those classes, which essentially constitute the periphery:

Occorrerebbe studiarlo [il folclore] invece come 'concezione del mondo e della vita', implicita in grande misura, di determinati strati (determinati nel tempo e nello spazio) della società, in contrapposizione (anch'essa per lo più implicita, meccanica, oggettiva) con le concezioni del mondo 'ufficiali' (o in senso più largo delle parti colte della società storicamente determinate) che si sono successe nello sviluppo storico.¹¹⁸

Folklore should instead be studied as a 'conception of the world and life' implicit to a large extent in determinate (in time and space) strata of society and in opposition (also for the most part implicit, mechanical and objective) to 'official' conceptions of the world (or in a broader sense, the conceptions of the cultured parts of historically determinate societies) that have succeeded one another in the historical process.¹¹⁹

The key word in this extract is 'strata', which Gramsci is likely to have borrowed from the linguistic studies of Ascoli and others (see 3.4 below). What has become a peripheral world-view, opposed to the 'official' world-view of the centre as a result of historical processes, belongs to societal strata, in the plural, that can be delineated both chronologically and spatially. This notion of peripherality fits well with the Rokkanian model outlined above.

To follow an emancipationist, anti-imperialist line in contemporary language questions is no straightforward matter. The adoption of a stance opposed to globalising forces can result in the support of nationalist forces, which are often just as imperialistic, and frequently more so, than the powers behind international languages. As the imagined communities of nations can inspire a degree of loyalty from populations to the extent that they are willing to die for their nation (see 1.5 above), nation-based hegemonies can actually

¹¹⁸ Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, III, p. 2311.

¹¹⁹ Gramsci, *Selections from Cultural Writings*, p. 189.

act as buffers to globalisation and, to a lesser extent, to internationalisation. The approach in this thesis will differ from that of Phillipson by observing and comparing linguistic hegemonies primarily within states, through which it will be possible to concentrate on the specific dynamics of more local centre-periphery relationships, in historical context.

3 The Development of the Italian Language Question

3.1 Dante's *vulgare illustre*

The dialect that would become the basis for modern Italian was Florentine, and this is mainly due to the literary dominance of Florence through the works of Dante Alighieri (1265-1321), Giovanni Boccaccio (1313-1375) and Francesco Petrarca (1304-1374), all of whom wrote in the Florentine vernacular. It would help that Florence was also a leading commercial power, and that Florentine lies between North and South in linguistic terms. Furthermore, Florentine and the wider family of Tuscan dialects were relatively conservative as linguistic varieties; they were regarded as less distant from Latin than other varieties in Italy, especially those of northern Italy, and therefore easier to learn and to understand for those who already had some knowledge of Latin, which once accounted for the majority of educated people in Italy.

Even when Latin was no longer anybody's native language, it remained for many centuries the language of formal situations and the most commonly used written language, but by the Middle Ages the vernacular was used as the normal spoken language.¹ In universities, however, Latin was still spoken until the fifteenth century, and Catholic Mass was celebrated in Latin until the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s. Documentation of the vernacular as a written language in Italy dates from 960 CE and is mainly made up of legal documents.² The vernacular literary tradition began later, with one of the first milestones marked by the school of Sicilian love poetry dating from the reign of Federico III in the

¹ Martin Maiden, *A Linguistic History of Italian* (London: Longman, 1995), p. 7.

² Claudio Marazzini, *Breve storia della lingua italiana* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2004), p. 56.

1220s. During the same era, other significant vernacular literary production was represented by the writings of Francis of Assisi (1181/1182-1226) and the *Dolce stil novo* of the 1280s: the poetry of Bologna and Tuscany, the major exponents of which were Guido Guinizelli (c. 1230-1276), Guido Cavalcanti (c. 1250-1300) and Dante Alighieri.

Dante wrote *La commedia*, which Boccaccio would later call *La divina commedia*, in Florentine vernacular, and this would be an important source for the Italian language in later centuries. He is also commonly seen as the first Italian linguist, as he was the first to study different vernaculars. His best known work on language is *De vulgari eloquentia* (*On Eloquence in the Vernacular*),³ which was written in about 1306 and was first published in 1529. This text dealt with the independence and strength of the vernacular, but was written in Latin; Dante wrote frequently in Latin as well as in the vernacular, as did many of the medieval vernacular authors.⁴

Dante put forward the idea that the vernacular languages were at least as noble as Latin, describing the vernacular as a spontaneous form of language learnt without rules or, in Gramsci's terminology, it represents a spontaneous or immanent grammar (see 2.2.4 above). This was in opposition to the '*gramatica*' (grammar) or official language, which at that time was Latin. According to Dante, Latin was a secondary language in that it was learnt after the vernacular by those who were able to obtain an education, but also secondary in that it was less 'noble' than the 'natural' vernacular.⁵ Dante identified at least fourteen main 'vulgar', or vernacular, languages in Italy. He thought that none of these were at that time eligible to be what he called the '*vulgare illustre*' (noble vernacular), which would

³ Dante Alighieri, *De vulgari eloquentia*, ed. by Steven Botterill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

⁴ Claudio Marazzini, *La storia della lingua italiana attraverso i testi* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2006), p. 80.

⁵ Alighieri, p. 2.

be a common language able to replace Latin as the main language of poetry. A true candidate would have to possess four important qualities, which he believed none of the vernacular languages had. It would need to be:

1. *Vulgare illustre* (a noble vernacular)
2. *Vulgare cardinale* (a point of reference for other vernaculars)
3. *Vulgare aulicum* (a vernacular suitable for use in the court)
4. *Vulgare curiale* (a vernacular suitable for the church)

Since there was no vernacular language that met these criteria, Dante believed that the *vulgare illustre* was an ideal language not only in the sense that it would be better, but also in the sense that it was an idea and an aspiration.⁶ For Dante, the best way to achieve this was to form a common language drawing on the best features of each dialect, removing harsh sounds such as aspirated sounds or gutturals. He thought that the features of such a language would have to be the simplest common denominators of Italian dialects, as these were most noble. Latin was already a language shared by all the cities of Italy, but it was not noble enough. It was not shared by all the people and was not a language 'naturally' learnt by people. A contradiction of the idea of bringing together certain features of different vernaculars to form a unified language, however, was that it did not necessarily present a particularly 'natural' solution, at least in the terms that Dante understood a process to be natural. By searching for what was 'specific to none of the towns of Italy but common to all',⁷ Dante is proposing for Italy essentially the same project that Ivar Aasen would actually

⁶ Joseph, *Language and Identity*, p. 100.

⁷ Ibid., p. 101.

pursue in Norway five centuries later (see Chapter 5 below), although Aasen's approach did not value urban dialects more highly than rural dialects.

One way to find a unified language would have been to go back in time not as far back as to when Latin was formed, but to the point when the vernaculars of Italy resembled each other more closely and were distinguishable all together as an Italian way of speech. To do this would have been to seek somewhat in vain for a moment in the past when the Italian nation was unified.⁸ This could therefore be seen as wishful thinking, but it was certainly a moment of imagining a community (see 1.5 above): the creation of the idea of an Italy that had once existed and that could be restored.

3.2 The four proposals of the sixteenth century

As well as Dante, the other two great Florentine writers of the age, Petrarch and Boccaccio, also wrote in the vernacular. After these three, the prestige of Florentine gradually grew as various writers from outside of Tuscany began to imitate the language of Florence in their works. Dante's linguistic treatise, on the other hand, remained largely unknown. Boccaccio, for example, knew the title and theme of *De vulgari eloquentia*, but he did not read it, and it is thought that there were only three codices made of the work. It remained obscure for the whole of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.⁹ In the fifteenth century, in particular, there was a certain backlash against the use of written vernaculars.¹⁰

Much later, Gramsci, exploring the role of intellectuals, would claim that philosophers and 'traditional intellectuals' are not defined by the nature of their work, i.e. thought, but

⁸ Ibid., pp. 101-102.

⁹ Claudio Marazzini, *Da Dante alla lingua selvaggia: Sette secoli di dibattiti sull'italiano* (Rome: Carocci, 1999), p. 26.

¹⁰ Anna Laura Lepschy and Giulio Lepschy, *The Italian Language Today*, 2nd edn. (London: Routledge, 1988), p. 22.

instead by their societal function as intellectuals, which does not mean that their thought is superior to that of others, but that they can effectively organise their thought.¹¹ However, intellectuals can, of course, alienate themselves from society. One of Gramsci's most explicit analyses of the societal role of languages is found in his observation of the split between the people and intellectuals or high culture in medieval Italy, which was exacerbated by the split between Latin and the spoken vernaculars.¹²

In the sixteenth century, it began to be more widely recognised and accepted that a vernacular language or '*lingua volgare*' should be used instead of Latin as the language of written culture. Although Italy was not a unified state, some were already imagining it as a single cultural community. It was then that the '*questione della lingua*' ('language question') began to be discussed. The question developed from one concerning whether to use Latin or the vernacular to one regarding the choice of which vernacular to use. Four main solutions were suggested, which represented two sets of opposed views. Firstly, there is the opposition of modernisers and archaists (as will be detailed below, Machiavelli/Giambullari and Trissino/Castiglione on one side, against Bembo and Muzio on the other), and secondly there are Tuscanists opposed to Italianists (Bembo and Machiavelli/Giambullari against Muzio and Trissino/Castiglione).¹³

Pietro Bembo (1470-1547) was from Venice, but he thought the best solution was to use archaic Florentine as the foundation for a standard cultural vernacular. In his major work on the language question, *Prose della volgar lingua* (1525), he advocated the use of the language of two centuries before his own time: Petrarch's style of language for poetry, and Boccaccio's style for prose. He portrayed this poetry/prose duo as reminiscent of the classical

¹¹ Ives, pp. 74-75.

¹² Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, I, p. 353.

¹³ Ibid.

pairings of Homer and Demosthenes or Virgil and Cicero.¹⁴ The language used by Petrarch and Boccaccio was already quite removed from the spoken language being used by people in the 1500s, but it was thought that this language could be learnt through study in the same way that learning Latin involved imitating the classics.¹⁵

Niccolò Machiavelli (1469-1527) and Pier Francesco Giambullari (1495-1555) were both from Florence, and they were among those who proposed the use by all Italians of the contemporary language of Florence. This was partly as a political move to secure the cultural hegemony of their city in the place of cities or regions further north. Machiavelli mentions explicitly Milan, Venice, Romagna and Lombardy as antagonists to Florence and Tuscany.¹⁶

Girolamo Muzio (1496-1576) suggested the codification of an archaic composite language, by dealing with the linguistic superstrata that he believed had influenced Vulgar Latin more than the substrata that had been in place before. He outlined what he believed to be the three historical linguistic phases behind the growth of the vernacular: Etruscan, Latin and the influence of 'barbarian' languages. He believed that Etruscan had not influenced the contemporary language at all, and that 'barbarians' had been the agents of linguistic change.¹⁷

Giangiorgio Trissino (1478-1550), like Dante, thought that a truly Italian language could only be born from a combination of elements common to all the dialects. Indeed, his theory is essentially a reproposal of Dante's model, based on the rediscovery of *De vulgari eloquentia*.¹⁸ A similar proposal for a composite but contemporary language came from Baldassar Castiglione (1478-1529), who wrote a treatise on how to handle diplomacy in

¹⁴ Marazzini, *Da Dante alla lingua selvaggia*, p. 42.

¹⁵ Lepschy and Lepschy, p. 22.

¹⁶ Marazzini, *Da Dante alla lingua selvaggia*, pp. 63-64.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

¹⁸ Marazzini, *Breve storia della lingua italiana*, pp. 116-117.

which he recommended the establishment of a '*lingua cortigiana*', a language of the courts.¹⁹ This meant basing the language on that used in the Pope's circle in Rome as well as the courts of Ferrara and Urbino.²⁰ The courtesan language proposal was very much one for an élite language.

Bembo's solution of archaic Florentine won through, appearing the most practical, as it was based on clearly defined texts, and furthermore, those texts were written by prestigious authors. One of the first writers to follow Bembo's scheme was Ludovico Ariosto (1474-1533), who revised his epic poem *Orlando Furioso* in light of Bembo's suggested norm.²¹ As a result of Bembo's programme, the Italian written language reached full development very quickly, having already existed for two hundred years. Another significant result of his programme is that the written vernacular was no longer based on the vernacular as currently spoken; it was based on the language as spoken in Florence in the 1300s. When the Florentine solution was later adopted as the official language of the unified Italian state, this led instead to the modern spoken language eventually being quite closely based on the written language, in spite of Alessandro Manzoni's plan to update the language (see 3.4 below). Therefore, although Florence is no longer nearly as culturally dominant as it once was, its historic cultural hegemony lives on in the form of the standard national language.

3.3 Purism and anti-purism

With one solution to the national language question gaining in acceptance among intellectuals from the sixteenth century, dialect literature developed in the modern sense, that is to say as texts written in varieties that are seen to be subordinate to a hegemonic,

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 116.

²⁰ Lepschy and Lepschy, p. 22.

²¹ Marazzini, *La storia della lingua italiana attraverso i testi*, pp. 114-115.

standardised language. These dialect texts often stress their local focus. So, from the sixteenth century, it could be said that literature was being produced in three languages: in Latin, in the national literary language Florentine and in dialects.²²

The year 1612 saw a landmark for the Italian language with the publication of the *Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca*, which was the first dictionary to prescribe what was 'allowed' and what was not in the use of the Italian language, as well as being the first great dictionary of a modern language. It was not intended to spread the language or to help the language's adoption as a spoken norm. The idea was to separate the 'wheat' from the 'chaff' (*crusca* means 'bran', and the symbol of the society was a sieve). Since it followed Bembo's ideal, this meant separating the language as used by 'pure' Tuscan authors of the fourteenth century from the language as used by everyone else. Instead of presenting the way authors write in an objective fashion, it gave a norm to which writers should be conforming.²³ There was considerable protest from non-Tuscan writers and intellectuals who noticed the dictionary lacked words that they used all the time. There followed a third edition of the dictionary in 1691 that enlarged the range of authors cited, including a number from after the fourteenth century such as Torquato Tasso (1544-1595), a poet who had never accepted the supremacy of the Florentine language over other vernaculars. The baroque poet Giovan Battista Marino (1569-1625), was still left out, even though he was considered the leading light of modern literary tastes at the time.²⁴

In the 1700s, certain Italian Enlightenment thinkers, such as Melchiorre Cesarotti (1730-1808), disagreed openly with the purist tendencies of the Accademia della Crusca, the self-appointed élite group that had produced the dictionary mentioned above. Cesarotti

²² Lepschy and Lepschy, pp. 22-23.

²³ Ibid., p. 23.

²⁴ Marazzini, *Da Dante alla lingua selvaggia*, pp. 91-93.

focused not only on the Italian language, but on a more general '*filosofia delle lingue*' (philosophy of languages). He believed that no languages are created by authorities or derive from rational projects. Instead, he claimed they grew out of use and tradition. Languages could not be governed by an élite, he thought, but rather by the majority, by the speakers of the language themselves. He also explained that all languages exhibit variety, and that all languages need constant renewal.²⁵ The solution he proposed to the Italian language question was to establish a national language council to take over the authority of the Crusca and redirect corpus planning in a direction of more benefit to the nation as a whole: in other words to make the linguistic hegemony of Italian more integral. One task he thought such a council could perform was to encourage the translation of foreign texts in order to renew and invigorate the Italian lexis. Marazzini notes that this presages the importance that the romantics of the next century would place on translation as a force to deprovincialise Italian culture.²⁶

The influential group behind the Milanese journal *Il Caffè* also came out strongly opposed to the Accademia della Crusca. Alessandro Verri (1741-1816) wrote a famous pamphlet announcing how weary the editorial group of *Il Caffè* was of the Florentine edicts in the Crusca dictionary. They believed that the attention paid to form or '*parole*' (words) in Italian culture was at the expense of substance or '*cose*' (things), so they wished to play no part in the language debate, even though they were doing just that by publishing this pamphlet.²⁷

In spite of critiques from Cesarotti, Verri, and others also influenced by the Enlightenment, a great many intellectuals still believed that the Tuscan solution could not be

²⁵ Marazzini, *Breve storia della lingua italiana*, pp. 157-158.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 161.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 156.

bettered. With a century still to pass before the emergence of a unified Italian state, this Italian national cultural standard was gaining ground as a language of oral communication in certain contexts. In 1757, Pope Benedict XIV allowed the public reading in vernacular of certain approved passages from the Bible. In 1764, Italian became the official language of the Kingdom of Sardinia, and in 1767 of the Neapolitan Kingdom. In the wake of the French Revolution of 1789, the political pressure grew for unification of the many disparate Italian city-states. The next century would see the Italian language used as a cultural legitimization of political unification, and at the same time, the language question became a much more practical issue.

3.4 The language question at Unification: Manzoni and Ascoli

The Milanese author Alessandro Manzoni (1785-1873) was concerned about the distance between the spoken vernaculars and the written language in Italy. He realised that the language question was important for the political and social project of Italian unification, and no longer solely a debate about the literary language. The written language was not just different from the way people spoke; it had not been used for everyday purposes, so there was a need to inject the language with a more modern functionality. He believed that the literary isolationism of Italian writers had practically turned Italian into a dead language.²⁸ Manzoni proposed to base the written language on contemporary nineteenth-century Florentine instead of the language of the fourteenth century. Instead of literature

²⁸ Brian Richardson, 'Questions of Language', in *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Italian Culture*, ed. by Zygmunt G. Barański and Rebecca J. West (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 63-79 (p. 66).

determining the form of a pan-Italian language, he thought that literature should espouse a language that was better suited to the circumstances of the contemporary society.²⁹

The new status of language as a force for state formation is exemplified in a patriotic poem written by Manzoni to commemorate the temporary revolutionary gains of the Carbonari movement in early 1821:

Una gente che libera tutta,
O fia serva tra l'Alpe ed il mare;
Una d'arme, di lingua, d'altare,
Di memorie, di sangue e di cor.³⁰

A people that frees every people,
Or shall be slave between the Alps and the sea;
One in arms, in language, in faith,
In remembrance, in blood and in heart.³¹

The national language was very clearly no longer something that only belonged to the *literati*, but to all of society and to the whole nation. Language had become an essential part of national identification, together with territorial borders ('between the Alps and the sea'), armed forces, religion, shared history and traditions ('remembrance'), race ('blood') and spirit and sense of belonging ('heart').

Manzoni wrote the first modern Italian novel *I promessi sposi* (*The Betrothed*) three times. The language of the first version, *Fermo e Lucia* (1821-1823) was a mixture of Florentine and Milanese, with a number of French borrowings and Latin neologisms. In the second version (1827), he aimed to come closer to the Florentine language with the aid of a Crusca-

²⁹ Lepschy and Lepschy, pp. 23-24.

³⁰ Alessandro Manzoni, 'Marzo 1821', in *Tutte le poesie: 1812-1872*, ed. by Gilberto Lonardi (Venice: Marsilio, 1987), p. 106.

³¹ Translation by Leofranc Holford-Stevens, in Alberto Rizzuti, 'Viganò's "Giovanna d'Arco" and Manzoni's "March 1821" in the Storm of 1821 Italy', *Music & Letters*, 86 (2005), 186-201 (p. 194).

based dictionary. In 1840, with Manzoni having spent some time in Florence, the third version came, in which he brought his language as close as he could to the contemporary Florentine language as spoken by educated people in the 1800s. As he put it, he had washed his language in the waters of the River Arno.

Manzoni was quite critical of the archaic purists. One clear example of his criticisms is found in notes he jotted down in the margins of his Crusca-based dictionary. Under the heading '*fare l'amore*' ('to make love' in modern Italian), the Crusca defined this idiom as '*fare buone accoglienze*' ('to greet in a friendly manner'). Manzoni wrote that this was ridiculous, as they left out a more modern meaning: not the meaning the term has today, but the meaning it had for most people in the nineteenth century, which was more along the lines of 'to talk of love' or 'to flirt'.³²

At the time of unification, only very few people could speak or write Italian. The 1861 census claimed that 75% of the population were illiterate. This should imply 25% literacy, but there is reason to believe that these figures are not entirely reliable. From reports on the Italian school system in the 1860s and early 1910s, it is clear that many of those who had received an elementary education, and who were therefore classified as 'literate', could not really read or write, and nor could they speak Italian.³³ The linguist Tullio De Mauro has estimated that only 2.5% of the population in 1861 were able to use Italian: less than 700,000 individuals. These included 400,000 people in Tuscany, 70,000 in Rome – whose dialects were most similar to the standard language – and 160,000 educated people in the rest of Italy.³⁴ Others have disputed these figures, but even the most generous estimates only

³² Marazzini, *La storia della lingua italiana attraverso i testi*, pp. 177-178.

³³ Lepschy and Lepschy, pp. 34-35.

³⁴ Tullio De Mauro, *Storia linguistica dell'Italia unita* (Roma: Laterza, 1983), p. 43.

suggest that about 10% of the population were able to use the national language.³⁵ These figures highlight the significance of the famous phrase, most frequently attributed to Massimo d'Azeglio: '*Abbiamo fatto l'Italia, ora dobbiamo fare gli Italiani*' ('We have made Italy, now we must make the Italians').

In 1867, the government of the newly unified Italian state established a commission, led by Manzoni, to report on how to spread the national language. This report was published in 1868, and Manzoni recommended teaching Florentine in schools across Italy, with teachers recruited directly from Tuscany, and prize trips to Tuscany for deserving pupils.³⁶ He recommended teaching the pupils good Italian prose, especially girls, as he hoped they would pass on the language to their children.³⁷ He also encouraged the production of a new Florentine dictionary, which he thought was the best way of translating his ideas into reality. This dictionary came out between 1870 and 1897, edited by the former Minister of Education and by Manzoni's son-in-law.³⁸ The encouragement of Manzoni's linguistic programme was a significant factor in cementing the success of his literary work, as it led to *I promessi sposi* being adopted by many schools after Unification. Manzoni's scholastic project was not, however, a great success, as great regional and social inequalities persisted.³⁹

In 1873, there came a notable reaction to Manzoni's project from the first modern Italian linguist, Graziadio Isaia Ascoli (1829-1907). Ascoli drew attention to the first word in the title of Manzoni's *Novo vocabolario glottologico italiano* (*New Italian Glottological Dictionary*),

³⁵ Arrigo Castellani, 'Quanti erano gl'italofoni nel 1861?', *Studi linguistici italiani*, 8 (1982), 3-26.

³⁶ Marazzini, *Da Dante alla lingua selvaggia*, pp. 164-165.

³⁷ Richardson, p. 66.

³⁸ Lepschy and Lepschy, p. 24.

³⁹ Maria Luisa Altieri Biagi, *Linguistica essenziale*, 2nd edn. (Milan: Garzanti, 2986), pp. 114-115.

in which the diphthong of 'nuovo' (new) had been replaced with a contemporary Florentine monophthong. For Ascoli, this single word was emblematic of a fundamental error in Manzoni's norm.

Dovremo noi credere, che un grammatico ragionatore pensi ad abolire, o a menomare, in nome dell'unità e del popolo, una proprietà del suo linguaggio, che sta così salda, ed esce così spontanea dalle viscere popolari?⁴⁰

Should we believe that, in the name of unity and of the people, a grammarian-thinker would consider abolishing, or disabling, a property of the people's language that is so established and that exits the popular viscera so spontaneously?

Ascoli did believe that the literary language should be the basis of Italian. Since it had already been used as a national language, though, it had absorbed some elements from other regions of Italy, even if these were not welcomed by Tuscanist purists. The Florentine spoken dialect had, on the other hand, followed its own path with less influence from other parts of Italy.⁴¹ In order for the established literary language to undergo the transformations necessary in order to become a truly national language, it would require greater intellectual involvement from the Italian people, which Ascoli thought was still lacking.

As a principal promoter of the theory of linguistic substrata, Ascoli believed most linguistic changes to be caused by the remnants of languages previously spoken in that area, and he took this to encompass both physiological and psychological effects present in speakers. The artificial linguistic unification for which Manzoni strove would create a strong set of substrata which would eternally put pressure on the new standard.⁴²

⁴⁰ Graziadio Isaia Ascoli, 'Il proemio all' *Archivio glottologico italiano*', in *Scritti sulla questione della lingua*, ed. by Corrado Grassi (Turin: Einaudi, 1975), pp. 3-44 (p. 9).

⁴¹ Lepschy and Lepschy, p. 25.

⁴² Ives, pp. 45-46.

Comparing the Italian case to that of other countries, Ascoli claimed that Manzoni's proposal of imposing contemporary Florentine as the basis for the national language and simply publishing a dictionary would not be enough to consolidate the national language. He referred to the cases of French and English, which were the product of centuries-long processes of political centralisation, and to German, which was based on thriving cultural and academic activity, through which '*milioni di menti [...] hanno agitato la penna operosa*' ('thousands of minds have wielded their industrious pens').⁴³ In order to replicate the German model, it would first be necessary to improve the social and cultural conditions of the Italian population.

As it turned out, Ascoli was right, and Italian developed according to the wider historical context and social changes that would take place, not according to the route dictated by language planners. But another idea supported by Ascoli, that the national language could also be spread in parallel with the cultivation of the dialect cultures that were already there, and the use of dialects in school, would not be realised.⁴⁴ The spread of the national language would, on the contrary, be at the expense of dialects.

Support for dialects was also forthcoming from Carlo Cattaneo (1801-1869), a Milanese federalist writer and philosopher. During the *Risorgimento*, there was debate over whether the unified Italian state should move away from the previous territorial fragmentation of the peninsula by centralising power in a unitary system, or whether a federalist system was preferable. Cattaneo was one of the main advocates of the federalist

⁴³ Ascoli, p. 16.

⁴⁴ Richardson, pp. 69-70.

solution, although the centralising current would claim victory.⁴⁵ Cattaneo was persuaded of the utility of Italian linguistic unification, but he also valued dialects as historiographical documents through which it was possible to retrace the past, and he was very defensive of the Milanese dialect in particular.⁴⁶

Il nostro dialetto, nei cordiali e schietti suoni del quale si palesa tanta parte della nostra índole, più sincera che insinuante, porta impresse le vestigia della nostra istoria.⁴⁷

Our dialect is imprinted with the remains of our history. In its cordial and frank sounds, a large part our temperament is revealed: more sincere than ornate.

Pursuing this idea, Cattaneo believed that dialects were bearers of a particular kind of history. In one sentence, he uses upper case letters to stress his point that:

[...] I DIALETTI RIMANGONO UNICA MEMORIA DI QUELLA PRISCA EUROPA, CHE NON EBBE ISTORIA, E NON LASCIÒ MONUMENTI.⁴⁸

[...] DIALECTS REMAIN THE ONLY MEMORY OF THAT ANCIENT EUROPE WITHOUT HISTORY, WHICH DID NOT LEAVE BEHIND ANY MONUMENTS.

This is, perhaps, primarily a reference to the almost archaeological potential of dialectology for discovering a hidden linguistic past, but it also suggests a conception of dialects remarkably similar to the Gramscian notion of dialects as subaltern languages (see 2.2.3

⁴⁵ Sharon Wood and Joseph Farrell, 'Other Voices: Contesting the Status Quo', in *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Italian Culture*, ed. by Zygmunt G. Barański and Rebecca J. West (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 131-149 (p. 139).

⁴⁶ Fabio Pusterla, 'Tra popolo e plebe: Carlo Cattaneo e il dialetto milanese', *Archivio Storico Ticinese*, 98-99 (1984), 133-152 (pp. 145-147).

⁴⁷ Carlo Cattaneo, *Opere scelte*, ed. by D. Castelnovo Frigessi, 4 vols (Turin: Einaudi, 1972), II, p. 469.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 201.

above). They may embody a subaltern world-view or an oral tradition that does not leave textual traces. In a metaphorical sense, Cattaneo's quotation also reinforces the peripheral connotations of dialects, as Rokkan stated that centres may be locations where monuments are built (see 2.3.1 above).

3.5 Gramsci and the language question

Gramsci's ideas about the problems of language in Italy were multi-faceted, and even contradictory at times.⁴⁹ His loyalties are occasionally divided between Sardinian and Italian, and although he wished for a national standard language, he also wanted dialect speakers to continue using their vernaculars. In a well known letter to his sister Teresina, Gramsci implores her to let her son Franco speak in Sardinian, regretting the fact that they had not allowed his niece Edmea to speak the language:

Spero che lo lascerete parlare in sardo e non gli darete dei dispiaceri a questo proposito. È stato un errore, per me, non aver lasciato che Edmea, da bambinetta, parlasse liberamente in sardo. Ciò ha nociuto alla sua formazione intellettuale e ha messo una camicia di forza alla sua fantasia. [...] Intanto il sardo non è un dialetto, ma una lingua a sé, quantunque non abbia una grande letteratura, ed è bene che i bambini imparino più lingue, se è possibile. [...] Ti raccomando, proprio di cuore, di non commettere un tale errore e di lasciare che i tuoi bambini succhino tutto il sardismo che vogliono e si sviluppino spontaneamente nell'ambiente naturale in cui sono nati: ciò non sarà un impaccio per il loro avvenire, tutt'altro.⁵⁰

I hope that you will let him speak in Sardinian and that you won't cause him any grief about it. I think it was a mistake not to have let Edmea speak Sardinian freely when she was a little girl. It will have harmed her intellectual development and put a straightjacket

⁴⁹ Luigi Rosiello, 'Problemi linguistici negli scritti di Gramsci', in *Gramsci e la cultura contemporanea: Atti del Convegno internazionale di studi gramsciani tenuto a Cagliari il 23-27 aprile 1967*, ed. by Pietro Rossi, 2 vols (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1969), II, pp. 347-367 (pp. 358-359).

⁵⁰ Gramsci, *Lettere dal carcere*, pp.64-65.

on her imagination. [...] Besides, Sardinian is not a dialect, but a language of its own, even if it does not have a great literature, and it is good for children to learn more than one language, if possible. [...] I heartily recommend that you do not commit such an error; that you let your children suck in all the *sardismo* ['Sardinianness'] they want to and develop spontaneously in the natural environment in which they were born: this won't be an obstacle for their future, anything but.

Here, once more, we see Gramsci's positive judgment of spontaneity (see 2.2.4 above) as part of children's linguistic development as well as their more general development. Like Ascoli (see 3.4 above), Gramsci also realised the worth of bilingualism. When he writes that 'it is good for children to learn more than one language', it is implicit that the child will also learn Italian, and Gramsci seems here to value Sardinian and national Italian culture equally, in spite of his comments elsewhere about provincial world-views (see 1.4 above). Indeed, here Gramsci states that Sardinian is a language, not a dialect, which implies that he believes it reflects a more coherent and complete world-view.

3.5.1 Gramsci's linguistic grounding

Gramsci's own proposed solution to the language question will be detailed in the following sub-sections, but it will first be necessary to consider Gramsci's education and early exposure to linguistics as a discipline. In 1911, Gramsci was awarded a scholarship and went to study on the mainland, at the University of Turin's Faculty of Letters. As a student there, he struck up a personal friendship with Matteo Bartoli (1873-1946), professor of glottology. Gramsci was in frequent attendance at Bartoli's lectures, and it appears that Bartoli's approachableness together with Gramsci's interest in the subject led to the development of a

great camaraderie between the two.⁵¹ Furthermore, Bartoli had an interest in the Sardinian language, and Gramsci helped Bartoli with some research into Sardinian, asking his family to confirm certain word forms when he wrote home.⁵²

Gramsci was awarded the maximum mark (*trenta e lode*) in his glottology exam.⁵³ He began to prepare a degree dissertation, under the supervision of Bartoli, on the linguistic situation of post-unification Italy, particularly on Ascoli and Manzoni.⁵⁴ In 1913, Gramsci also compiled course notes based on Bartoli's glottology lectures from the academic year 1912-1913.⁵⁵ Bartoli was from Istria, and his courses duly appear to have included many references to the linguistics of Balkan regions. Indeed, the second part of Gramsci's notes on Bartoli's lectures focuses entirely on '*Etnografia balcanica*' ('Balkan ethnography'). Bartoli differed from many of his contemporaries in the field in his interest for living dialects, including those of Dalmatia.⁵⁶ The frequent use of linguistic maps testifies to Bartoli's ideas of areal or spatial linguistics, as does the praise apportioned to the *Atlas linguistique de la France* edited by Jules Gilliéron, under whom Bartoli himself had studied.⁵⁷ Gilliéron's principles and the methodology he employed in his famous work inspired the school of neo-linguistics, of which Bartoli was an exponent.

⁵¹ Angelo d'Orsi, 'Lo studente che non divenne "dottore" Gramsci all'Università di Torino', *Studi storici*, 40 (1999), 39-75 (p. 67).

⁵² Antonio Gramsci, *Lettere 1908-1926*, ed. by Antonio A. Santucci (Turin: Einaudi, 1992), p. 61.

⁵³ D'Orsi, p. 67.

⁵⁴ Tullio De Mauro, 'Il linguaggio dalla natura alla storia: Ancora su Gramsci linguista', in *Gramsci da un secolo all'altro*, ed. by Giorgio Baratta and Guido Liguori (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1999), pp. 68-79 (p. 71).

⁵⁵ Renzo De Felice, 'Un corso di glottologia di Matteo Bartoli negli appunti di Antonio Gramsci', *Rivista storica del socialismo*, 7 (1964), 219-221 (p. 219).

⁵⁶ Emilia Passaponti, 'Gramsci e le questioni linguistiche', in *Lingua, linguaggi, e società: Proposta per un aggiornamento*, ed. by Stefano Gensini and Massimo Vedovelli (Florence: Luciano Manzuoli, 1978), pp. 106-115 (p. 109).

⁵⁷ De Felice, pp. 220-221.

As well as making use of Gilliéron's work, Bartoli was also inspired by the studies of Ascoli (see 3.4 above). While other scholars concentrated on the biological and physiological aspects of Ascoli's writings, Bartoli drew on the more cultural and historical sides to create his own method of describing linguistic change through language conflict. Bartoli assumed that where two competing word forms existed, one had to be older than the other, and he developed 'tests' to determine which form was likely to be the oldest. Linguistic change was, according to Bartoli, intrinsically linked to cultural power.⁵⁸

[S]i deduce che i linguaggi più conservativi sono quelli che hanno meno sofferto l'influsso di linguaggi stranieri. Ma, più precisamente, invece che linguaggi stranieri, si deve dire in questo caso: linguaggi parlati da popoli che hanno un maggior prestigio, che esercitano un ascendente sugli *imitatori*.⁵⁹

It can be deduced that the most conservative languages are those that have suffered the least influence of foreign languages. In this case, however, instead of foreign languages it is more precise to say: languages spoken by populations with greater prestige, who exercise an influence on their *imitators*.

Bartoli called his doctrine neo-linguistics so as to distinguish it from another school, the positivist Neogrammarians, who took historical comparative grammar to radical lengths.⁶⁰ Karl Brugmann and Hermann Osthoff outlined the Neogrammarians' hard-line approach to comparative grammar in 1878. The most important principle they set out was that the 'sound laws', which they considered to rule supreme over language changes, were exceptionless, as they saw all changes to be due to the internal 'mechanics' of a language.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Ives, pp. 46-47.

⁵⁹ Giulio Bertoni and Matteo G. Bartoli, *Breviario di neolinguistica* (Modena: Società tipografica modenese, 1928), p. 94.

⁶⁰ Lo Piparo, pp. 59-61.

⁶¹ Ives, p. 49.

In the conflict between the neo-linguists and the Neogrammarians, Gramsci saw a struggle between two ideologically opposed methodologies. While the Neogrammarians were convinced that primarily mechanical or physiological factors determined linguistic changes, the neo-linguists attempted to observe the socio-cultural conflicts that lay behind linguistic changes.⁶² It is clear where Gramsci's own sympathies lay. In one of Gramsci's first letters from prison, he wrote that he wished to write about comparative linguistics from a viewpoint opposed to the Neogrammarians. He expressed regret for not having followed the path Bartoli would have liked to see his prodigy take, as he had hoped Gramsci could effectively silence the Neogrammarians, to whom Gramsci refers as a '*geldra di infamissimi uomini*' ('crowd of dreadful men').⁶³ In fact, Bartoli himself may not have been as forceful in his critique of the Neogrammarians as he would have liked. He later changed the name of his school of thought opposed to the Neogrammarians from 'neo-linguistics' to 'areal' or 'spatial' linguistics, as he was concerned about angering members of the earlier school.⁶⁴ The shift in terminology was also related to the split between Bartoli and his former colleague Giulio Bertoni (1878-1942).⁶⁵

Bartoli elaborated 'norms' of spatial linguistics based on the categorisation of areas in terms of their relative accessibility. Their significance was demonstrated by observing which areas conserved word forms that were considered to resemble most closely the oldest Latin form of the word. Four types of area are described: *l'area più isolata* (the most isolated area, i.e. furthest away from a cultural centre), *le aree laterali* (lateral or peripheral areas), *l'area*

⁶² Luigi Rosiello, 'Linguistica e marxismo nel pensiero di Antonio Gramsci', in *The History of Linguistics in Italy*, ed. by Paolo Ramat, Hans-J. Niederehe and Konrad Koerner (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1986), pp. 237-258 (p. 237).

⁶³ Gramsci, *Lettere dal carcere*, p. 59.

⁶⁴ Lo Piparo, p. 59.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

maggiore (the larger area) and *l'area seriore* (the later area).⁶⁶ In addition there was the *fase sparita* (disappeared phase), which covered words that had fallen out of use.⁶⁷ The Sardinian words that Gramsci wrote home to enquire about would presumably have informed his research into the most isolated area, especially as he asks for words from Fonni, a village in the rugged interior of the Province of Nuoro, in the area where the Logudorese dialect is spoken, which is a particularly conservative dialect.⁶⁸

Gramsci's friendship with Bartoli was of great importance for the Sardinian's future thought. In addition to the linguistic education he gave Gramsci, it was Bartoli who introduced Gramsci to Annibale Pastore, who in turn introduced the young Sardinian to the works of Marx.⁶⁹ Moreover, Gramsci is highly likely to have first met the term 'hegemony' – the concept with which he is most famously associated – through his university studies of language (see 2.2 above). When writing Bartoli's lecture notes in 1913, Gramsci transcribed the word *egemonia*.⁷⁰

As announced in a publicity brochure in 1918, Gustavo Balsamo-Crivelli, editor of the series *Collezione di classici italiani con introduzioni critiche e note* for the publishers UTET, even enlisted Gramsci to edit the volume of Alessandro Manzoni's *Scritti su la lingua italiana*.⁷¹ Although the work was never published, the fact Balsamo-Crivelli entrusted this important undertaking to such a young undergraduate student is evidence of Gramsci's promise as a linguist. According to Angelo d'Orsi, it is likely that Bartoli recommended Gramsci for this

⁶⁶ Bertoni and Bartoli, p. 66.

⁶⁷ Ibid., pp. 74-75.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 70; Rosiello, 'Linguistica e marxismo nel pensiero di Antonio Gramsci', p. 238.

⁶⁹ Eduardo Blasco Ferrer, 'Il pensiero linguistico di Gramsci nei *Quaderni del carcere*', in *Il pensiero permanente: Gramsci oltre il suo tempo*, ed. by Eugenio Orrù and Nereide Rudas (Cagliari: Tema, 1999), pp. 50-60 (pp. 50-51).

⁷⁰ Lo Piparo, p. 94.

⁷¹ Giancarlo Bergami, 'Gustavo Balsamo-Crivelli', *Belfagor*, 30 (1975), 537-568 (p. 557).

task.⁷² Gramsci does mention in a letter to Tatiana Schucht, his sister-in-law, in 1930 that he had been working on an essay ten years earlier about the language question according to Manzoni, and that this led him to conduct further research into the organisation of Italian culture from 400 CE.⁷³ According to Antonio Carrannante, this study has been lost.⁷⁴ Whether or not Gramsci ever began working on this publication, he was certainly well versed in Manzoni's linguistic ideas, as will be seen in his criticisms both of Manzoni and of Esperanto.

3.5.2 The critique of Esperanto and Manzonian language planning

Gramsci's position on Esperanto is quite revealing in terms of his overall ideas on language and power. He first wrote on the subject as early as 1918, when a debate arose in socialist newspapers, including *Avanti!*, for which Gramsci edited the Piedmontese edition, about whether the socialist movement should actively promote Esperanto as an international language. In his final contribution to the debate, Gramsci transferred Ascoli's criticisms against Manzoni's language plans to Esperanto. Both Manzoni's endorsement of a Florentine standard and the promotion of Esperanto would see a new, anti-historicist standard artificially introduced without the involvement of language users at large. If, as some believed, the Florentine project had failed, what hope was there for Esperanto, which had considerably less cultural capital?⁷⁵ Gramsci, then, believed an integral hegemonic international language, like a national language, should primarily be the product of a

⁷² D'Orsi, p. 68.

⁷³ Gramsci, *Lettere dal carcere*, p. 378.

⁷⁴ Antonio Carrannante, 'Antonio Gramsci e i problemi della lingua italiana', *Belfagor*, 28 (1973), 544-556 (p. 545).

⁷⁵ Antonio Gramsci, *La città futura: 1917-1918*, ed. by Sergio Caprioglio (Turin: Einaudi, 1982), pp. 668-674.

bottom-up process. Esperantists still submit today that their aim is to encourage the growth of their international language '*de malsupre*' ('from below').⁷⁶ The basic form of Esperanto, however, is pre-determined and set in stone.

By drawing a comparison between Manzoni's strategy and Esperanto, Gramsci was being particularly critical of Manzoni. Although Manzoni saw it as crucial that a written standard should be a 'living' language, Gramsci implied that Florentine might as well be a dead language for those for whom it is unfamiliar, especially outside northern Italy. Regardless of the aims of either Manzoni or Esperantists, 'the implications are detrimental to subaltern consciousness and freedom'.⁷⁷

Based on Gramsci's criticism of Esperanto, it may seem that Gramsci took for granted that the nation was the only important level on which a common language needed to be created. At the time, Gramsci believed that culture, language and politics should first be co-ordinated on a national level in Italy and elsewhere, then at a European level, and finally at a world level.⁷⁸ However, as detailed above, Gramsci also recognised the importance of sub-national subaltern languages.

In the *Prison Notebooks*, just as the historical development of language and its spontaneous and normative grammars is seen as a metaphor of hegemony (see 2.2 above), Esperanto is used as a metaphor for artificiality.⁷⁹ Gramsci writes, for instance, of the tendency of some scientists and philosophers to want to create '*un esperanto o volapük della filosofia e della scienza*' ('an Esperanto or Volapük of philosophy and science'), born of a lack

⁷⁶ Andrea Montagner, 'Antaŭparolo: Gramsci kaj Esperanto = Prefazione: Gramsci e l'esperanto', in *Gramsci kaj Esperanto: Kion oni scias kaj kion oni devas scii = Gramsci e l'esperanto: Quello che si sa e quello che si deve sapere*, ed. by Andrea Montagner (Milan: Arcipelago Edizioni, 2009), pp. 34-41 (p. 38).

⁷⁷ Ives, p. 59.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 162.

⁷⁹ Lo Piparo, pp. 130-131.

of understanding of the historicity of language and, hence, also of philosophy, ideologies and scientific discourse.⁸⁰ There are also parallels between Gramsci's views of Esperanto and those he held of the *Risorgimento*, the 'passive revolution' that united the Italian peninsula. The Esperantist programme, as Gramsci saw it, and the *Risorgimento* were both 'processes whereby subaltern people submit to top-down impositions of specific policies and more general world-views or ideologies', which contrast with their own world-views or are directly against their interests.⁸¹

3.5.3 An alternative solution to the language question

Although Gramsci is critical of Manzoni and Esperanto, he is not necessarily against the codification of normative grammars. In fact, he does advocate the creation of an Italian national grammar:

[È razionale] una collaborazione di fatto e un accoglimento volenteroso di tutto ciò che possa servire a creare una lingua comune nazionale, la cui non esistenza determina attriti specialmente nelle masse popolari, in cui sono più tenaci di quanto non si creda i particolarismi locali e i fenomeni di psicologia risretta e provinciale.⁸²

[I]t is rational to collaborate practically and willingly to welcome everything that may serve to create a common national language, the non-existence of which creates friction particularly in the popular masses among whom local particularisms and phenomena of a narrow and provincial mentality are more tenacious than is believed.⁸³

⁸⁰ Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, II, p. 1466.

⁸¹ Ives, p. 58.

⁸² Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, III, p. 2344.

⁸³ Gramsci, *Selections from Cultural Writings*, p. 182.

As an example of the 'friction' generated in the popular masses by the lack of a national language, it could be claimed that the world-views perpetuated in the use of regional dialects prevented the southern peasantry and northern proletariat from uniting.⁸⁴ An integral hegemony should 'enable communication among the cultural levels that make up a national culture'.⁸⁵ Gramsci does, however, make a distinction between regressive and progressive normative grammars. Manzoni's imposition of the dialect of middle-class Florence as a normative grammar made no concessions to those from other classes or regions, for whom this was as good as a foreign language. It was, therefore, detrimental to subaltern consciousness and freedom. Gramsci agreed with Ascoli, who '*non crede alle egemonie [culturali] per decreto*'⁸⁶ ('does not believe in cultural hegemonies imposed by decree').⁸⁷

The counter-proposal Gramsci made was to combine 'the existing spontaneous grammars into a single, normative grammar', which would be more representative of regional diversity.⁸⁸ This would ideally take place slowly, '*attraverso tutto un complesso di processi molecolari*'⁸⁹ ('through a whole complex of molecular processes') (see also 2.2 above), although a level of organisation may accelerate the process, as long as it is an already established process.⁹⁰ This alternative solution to the language question is consonant with broader notions of counter-hegemony. Gramsci's support for the establishment of a common national language does not mean he wished to create a monolingual nation. An effective

⁸⁴ Ives, pp. 98-99.

⁸⁵ Nadia Urbinati, 'The Souths of Antonio Gramsci and the Concept of Hegemony', in *Italy's 'Southern Question': Orientalism in One Country*, ed. by Jane Schneider (Oxford: Berg, 1998), pp. 135-156 (p. 151).

⁸⁶ Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, III, p. 2237 (brackets in original).

⁸⁷ Gramsci, *Selections from Cultural Writings*, p. 173.

⁸⁸ Ives, p. 100.

⁸⁹ Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, III, p. 2345.

⁹⁰ Gramsci, *Selections from Cultural Writings*, p. 183.

national language 'demands that [its] hegemony is created democratically through [...] active participation'.⁹¹ A passive linguistic revolution, however, can only be maintained 'through recourse to ever more brute force'; for an effective, ethical linguistic change, what is needed is widespread 'reciprocal change'.⁹²

Gramsci's linguistic writings would later influence a new generation when the first editions of his *Prison Notebooks* were published (see 4.1 below). Nevertheless, Gramsci's ideal process has not yet been realised in Italy, and the national standard remains rooted in Florentine, in spite of the influence of alternative linguistic centres (see 4.1 below). In Norway, however, Ivar Aasen may have succeeded in combining spontaneous grammars of Norwegian dialects into the single, normative grammar of Nynorsk (see Chapter 5 below).

3.6 Fascism and language

The Fascist regime aimed for Italy to become a strongly defined nation, and to this end a number of puristic linguistic measures and campaigns were launched. The regime saw the literary language as the only national language. Dialects were seen as 'below' the national language, due to their social situation and low prestige, and the prestige of dialects would suffer greatly during Fascism, not least from the policies of centralisation in many sectors, even though the policies themselves were often unsuccessful. In education, one of the first Fascist initiatives involved reversing a previously planned reform that would have introduced an element of dialect education into schools as a stepping stone on the route to acquisition of Italian, and by 1933 the existence of dialects was officially denied.⁹³ Giovanni

⁹¹ Ives, p. 113.

⁹² Ibid., p. 125.

⁹³ Arturo Tosi, *Language and Society in a Changing Italy* (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 2001), p. 7.

Gentile's education reforms of 1923 also introduced a new category of schools that did not offer opportunities for further study: the *scuole complementari* (complementary schools). These worked against the linguistic aims of the regime, as the new system immobilised certain social groups, creating oases where dialects could continue to flourish.

Beyond action against dialects, a second aim of Fascist language policy was to exterminate minority languages, including in Südtirol-Alto Adige (the German-speaking province of what is today the region of Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtirol) and in the Julian March (with its Slovene- and Croatian-speaking populations), which had only been annexed by Italy a few years before the Fascist era, at the end of the First World War. The new prefect of the Province of Trento, Giuseppe Guadagnino, made it one of his first acts in office, on 26 November 1922, to affirm by decree the precedence of the Italian language over German in Südtirol-Alto Adige, including on private shop signs.⁹⁴

In 1923, Italian was also made the only official language of primary education for the whole of Italy. This measure sought to strengthen the sense of Italianness of linguistic minorities in order to reduce irredentist sentiment. German was, however, reintroduced for teaching in Südtirol-Alto Adige in the mid-1930s following the bilateral pacts with Nazi Germany.⁹⁵ In the northern minority regions, some people were forced to change their given names or surnames, and place-names were also changed.⁹⁶

In addition to the opposition to dialects and minority languages, a third, and the most enthusiastically pursued, principal dimension of Fascist language policy involved the purist

⁹⁴ Sergio Raffaelli, *Le parole proibite: Purismo di stato e regolamentazione della pubblicità in Italia (1812-1945)* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1983), pp. 111-112.

⁹⁵ Richardson, p. 71.

⁹⁶ Paolo Parovel, *L'identità cancellata: L'italianizzazione forzata dei cognomi, nomi e toponimi nella 'Venezia Giulia' dal 1919 al 1945, con gli elenchi delle provincie di Trieste, Gorizia, Istria ed i dati dei primi 3.500 decreti* (Trieste: Eugenio Parovel, 1985).

opposition to foreign loanwords. In 1923, a tax was introduced on foreign words on shop signs. Their use on signs was banned outright in 1940, when an official poster famously declared '*Italiani, boicottate le parole straniere*' ('Italians, boycott foreign words'), apparently oblivious to the fact that 'boycott' came to Italian from English, via French.⁹⁷ The word is derived from the name of Charles Boycott, a British land agent who was shunned by campaigners for land rights in Ireland in 1880. Alternatives to loanwords were encouraged, which would be either translations or adaptations of the foreign words. Some of these substitutions were successful and are still in use today, such as *regista* (director) in place of *régisseur* and *calcio* (football) in place of *foot-ball*.⁹⁸ A number of loanwords that fell out of favour during the two decades of Fascist rule, including *foot-ball* or *fotball*, are still used today in the Italian-speaking cantons of Switzerland: monolingual Ticino and the trilingual (German-Italian-Romansch) Graubünden-Grigioni-Grischun.⁹⁹ Such words are therefore part of the Swiss-specific Italian vocabulary, or *elvetismi* (Helvetisms). Some loanwords that are now obsolete in standard Italian are also still found in dialects in Italy itself.¹⁰⁰ The purist approach to the eradication of loanwords under Fascism was, however, quite inconsistent. Some words whose foreign origins were very apparent, such as '*film*' or '*sport*' were still allowed.¹⁰¹

Another language policy of the Fascist regime was the plan that Italian should reflect Roman pronunciation rather than Florentine, as Rome was the capital and was to be the

⁹⁷ Lepschy and Lepschy, p. 29.

⁹⁸ Claudio Giovanardi, 'Il linguaggio sportivo', in *Lingua e identità: Una storia sociale dell'italiano*, ed. by Pietro Trifone (Rome: Carocci, 2006), pp. 241-268 (p. 245).

⁹⁹ Sergio Savoia and Ettore Vitale, *Lo Svizzionario: Splendori, miserie e segreti della lingua italiana in Svizzera*, 3rd edn. (Bellinzona: [n.pub.], 2008), pp. 32-33.

¹⁰⁰ Pier Vincenzo Mengaldo, *Storia della lingua italiana: Il Novecento* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1994), p. 45.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

focal point of the new Italian Empire. The slogan for this unsuccessful policy was '*Lingua toscana in bocca romana*' ('Tuscan tongue in Roman mouth'), which sat well with other slogans such as '*Signori, io sono romano*' ('Gentlemen, I am a Roman').¹⁰² Despite the general failure of this policy, one occasion in which this policy could be heard was on the state radio, as a pronunciation guide was produced that recognised the role of the so-called '*asse linguistico Roma-Firenze*' ('Rome-Florence linguistic axis'), a term that was meant to recall the Rome-Berlin Axis of the day.¹⁰³ According to this guide, when pronunciation differed between Rome and Florence, it was the Roman pronunciation that should be preferred, especially with reference to the different vowel qualities: the Roman *pòrgo* (I give) instead of Florentine *pórgo* and the Roman *léttera* (letter) instead of Florentine *lèttera*.¹⁰⁴

Apart from the campaign against loanwords, which was partly successful, most overt Fascist language policy did not have a major lasting effect; the most significant linguistic impact of Fascism was instead connected with political rhetoric.¹⁰⁵ The social policies of Fascism, altogether, had a greater impact on the development of Italian. The discouragement of emigration and internal migration, in particular, temporarily reduced the effect of urbanisation, which had earlier been working in favour of greater linguistic unification. Fascist social policies therefore had a provincialising effect on language and culture.¹⁰⁶ The sociolinguistic situation was influenced away from the centralising, uniform situation that the Fascists had been aiming to create.

¹⁰² Tosi, p. 9.

¹⁰³ Marazzini, *Da Dante alla lingua selvaggia*, pp. 188.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 187.

¹⁰⁵ Tosi, p. 11.

¹⁰⁶ Altieri Biagi, pp. 141-143.

3.7 The dawn of the Republic

The Constitution for the new Italian Republic was composed in 1947 and came into force in 1948. The Constitution includes several provisions of relevance for language policy. In particular, Article 3 is intended to promote equality and states that citizens are equal irrespective of sex, race, language, religion, political opinions and social conditions. Article 5 establishes that the Republic guarantees the recognition of local autonomies and introduces the principle of administrative decentralisation, and Article 6 states that linguistic minorities are protected by the Republic. This latter article was intended to repair some of the damage done by the policies of the Fascist regime. It was eventually more comprehensively enabled in 1999 by the adoption of a detailed law on minority languages (see Chapter 4 below). Article 21 also includes the right to freedom of speech, which can be considered to be applicable to the use of different kinds of languages.

By 1951, although 87.1% of the population were classified as literate,¹⁰⁷ in other words nominally able to read and write standard Italian, only 18.5% of the population are said to have completely moved from speaking dialects to Italian, while 63.5% were routinely using dialect, either by itself or in alternation with Italian.¹⁰⁸ In De Mauro's work on the post-Unification history of the Italian language, which has almost achieved the status of an official history, a number of factors are considered to have contributed to the diffusion of the national language since the *Risorgimento*, and which in the post-war era gradually led to greater popular participation in linguistic development.

Firstly, education was responsible for increasing literacy rates and for the inculcation of the literary standard, and the methods and ideology of education led to the ideal

¹⁰⁷ De Mauro, *Storia linguistica dell'Italia unita*, p. 91.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.130-131.

normative model being '*il parlare "come un libro stampato"*' ('speaking "like a printed book"').¹⁰⁹ The Tuscan author Carlo Collodi's *Pinocchio* is even said to speak like a printed book when he goes to school.¹¹⁰ As a growing proportion of the population had knowledge of Italian, parents decided to give their children a grounding in standard Italian at home in order to afford them a head-start at school. The more open school system introduced in the post-war era and the right to education, included in the Constitution, have also encouraged what is today a very high level of education.

Emigration from Italy had a significant effect on levels of literacy. Many of those who emigrated in earlier decades had been in the greatest conditions of poverty and with the lowest levels of education, and their departure had a notable impact on regional literacy statistics. Evidence of the correlation between illiteracy and emigration came with the introduction of the US Immigration Act of 1917. This required immigrants to the US to be literate, and the numbers of those leaving Italy fell dramatically. Emigrants often improved their education while abroad, learning to write and sending letters to their relatives in Italy, and those who returned to Italy often bolstered literacy levels.¹¹¹

A growing role in linguistic unification was played by urbanisation and internal migration, especially from the South to the industrial North, spurred on by the post-war economic boom. This would of course weaken many dialects, and it turned the cities into melting pots for the formation of the modern language. The development was not, however, one of uniform fusion towards a national Italian norm. In some cases, the dialects of regional urban centres would be strengthened by the influx of people from nearby rural areas and

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 104.

¹¹⁰ Carlo Collodi, *Le avventure di Pinocchio: Storia di un burattino*, 18th edn. (Florence: Bemporad, 1901; repr. Florence: Giunti, 2000), p. 119.

¹¹¹ Ibid., pp. 59-61.

smaller provincial centres.¹¹² The prestige of Milanese pronunciation of Italian was a particular beneficiary of these changes in the spread of population. The factory itself has also functioned as a crucible for linguistic levelling.¹¹³

Bureaucracy acted as a centralising force both politically and linguistically. It had a particularly strong effect on bureaucrats themselves, who often felt obliged to stop speaking dialects and to speak in the national language, at least in public, and they would occasionally move to work in different parts of the country.¹¹⁴ A much more penetrative influence came as a result of the compulsory military service to which all Italian males born before 1986 had to submit. Many men were sent to different parts of the country, where they would meet other young men from all across Italy. De Mauro sees the First World War as the moment when the national spoken language really began to spread, and when the rise was seen of a popular standard for spoken Italian, '*l'italiano popolare*', as a result of Italian soldiers coming together in the trenches.¹¹⁵

The greatest forces of all, however, in the move away from dialects and towards the national language, have been the mass media. The cinema, radio and television, in particular, have presented different linguistic models to audiences in every region of Italy. That they were able to do so irrespective of the audience's level of literacy marked their main difference from printed media.¹¹⁶ If a popular form of Italian was born during the First World War, it was only after the Second World War that it really made a breakthrough, due to the increased profile of cinema, radio and television, which began broadcasting in 1954. Half of the population listened to the radio on a daily basis by the mid-1960s, and in 1964,

¹¹² Lepschy and Lepschy, pp. 35-36.

¹¹³ Altieri Biagi, pp. 115-116.

¹¹⁴ De Mauro, *Storia linguistica dell'Italia unita*, p. 105.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 108-109.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

32% of families watched television every day.¹¹⁷ Radio had frequently used relatively formal language, but as television offered entertainment, information and advertising, it gave its audiences both a wide thematic variety of programming and a wide range of linguistic styles, syntax and lexis.¹¹⁸

Television therefore created the perfect conditions for the acquisition of the national language. Among the different styles of Italian that television has disseminated were geographical variants of Italian: not dialects, but *italiani regionali* (regional Italians), which may be regionally defined primarily in terms of accent. Dialects, on the other hand, were often seen as objects of ridicule on television, and this would galvanise negative attitudes towards them.¹¹⁹ Instead of Florentine, the state television RAI and Silvio Berlusconi's private Mediaset network have each made particular use of the regional languages of Lazio and Lombardy respectively, reflecting the locations of their headquarters and production facilities, and the prestige of the Milanese accent has grown considerably.¹²⁰

Together with a centralising linguistic norm, it has been claimed that Italian culture as a whole is also a centralising force.¹²¹ The existence and prominence of regional variants of Italian demonstrates, however, that the centralising force is not just towards the national level, but is also, or perhaps primarily, based on the power of regional centres. Popular culture succeeded where centuries of top-down pressure failed to make Italian a national language. The forces controlling the media, however, could also be portrayed as top-down forces, not least in Italy. Over three periods – from 10 May 1994 to 17 January 2005, from 11 June 2001 to 17 May 2006, and from 8 May 2008 to present (at the time of writing) – both the

¹¹⁷ Tosi, p. 13.

¹¹⁸ De Mauro, *Storia linguistica dell'Italia unita*, p. 125.

¹¹⁹ Tosi, p. 13.

¹²⁰ Marazzini, *Breve storia della lingua italiana*, p. 216.

¹²¹ Gaetano Berruto, *L'italiano impopolare* (Naples: Liguori, 1978), p. 20.

state television networks and the three largest private television networks have been under the ultimate control of Silvio Berlusconi.

4 Linguistic Wars of Position in Modern-Day Italy

4.1 'New language questions'

Although dialects were losing ground to the national language after the Second World War, the use of dialects and regional forms of Italian was becoming more common in certain niches of cultural production that wanted to give a more realistic picture of modern Italian society. Dialects were used for stylistic effect, for example, in films of the neo-realist movement, such as in *Paisà* (1946), directed by Roberto Rossellini (1906-1977). Dialects were also used, although in very different ways, in the experimental writings of, for example, Carlo Emilio Gadda (1893-1973) and Pier Paolo Pasolini (1922-1975). Gadda sought to create stylistic tension through the use of different forms of Italian, including the literary language, obsolete styles, technical language and pieces of various dialects, while Pasolini, who was greatly inspired by Gramsci, wished to recreate the intense language of the poor peripheral suburbs of Rome.¹

By the 1960s, however, Pasolini was no longer using dialects to the same degree that he had done previously. In a series of debate pieces on the '*nuove questioni linguistiche*' (new linguistic questions) originally written in 1964-1965, Pasolini claimed that '*è nato l'italiano come lingua nazionale*'² ('Italian has been born as a national language').³ He put forward that the language had appeared in industrial northern Italy. He suggested that it was based on an

¹ Lepschy and Lepschy, pp. 31-32.

² Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Empirismo eretico* (Milan: Garzanti, 1972), p. 24.

³ Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Heretical Empiricism*, ed. by Louise K. Barnett, trans. by Ben Lawton and Louise K. Barnett (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988), p. 17.

'omologante' ('homologating') technical-scientific language representative of the emerging neocapitalist technocracy, and indeed that it marked the ascendancy of this class.

Qual è dunque la base strutturale, economico-politica, da cui emana questo principio unico, regolamentatore e omologante di tutti i linguaggi nazionali, sotto il segno del tecnicismo e della comunicazione? Non è difficile a questo punto avanzare l'ipotesi che si tratti del momento ideale in cui la borghesia paleoindustriale si fa neocapitalista almeno *in nuce*, e il linguaggio padronale è sostituito dal linguaggio tecnocratico.⁴

What is then the economic-political structural base from which emanates this single principle, regulator and homologator of all national languages under the sign of technology and communication? At this point it isn't difficult to advance the hypothesis that it is the ideal moment in which the paleoindustrial bourgeoisie becomes neocapitalistic, at least *in nuce*, and technocratic language is substituted for the language of the bosses.⁵

The new language, which Calvino called '*antilingua*'⁶ ('anti-language') was perhaps well suited to the neocapitalist society Italy had become, but Pasolini thought it would be a duller language. He did not like the shape things had taken, but he recognised that this was the first time Italy really had a national language that was not merely a literary language. His prognosis for expressivity in Italian was probably too drastic, and he overestimated the influence of technical language. He was right, however, that Italian at least seemed to have arrived as a national language, although it was too soon to predict the extent of any increased spirit of unification this would encourage.

According to Pasolini, the immediate post-war period had seen a strengthening of the emphasis on Rome, and also on Naples, as irradiating centres of linguistic development.

There was now, however, a move away from this Rome-Naples axis, which had replaced the

⁴ Pasolini, *Empirismo eretico*, pp. 23-24.

⁵ Pasolini, *Heretical Empiricism*, p. 17.

⁶ Italo Calvino, *Una pietra sopra: Discorsi di letteratura e società* (Turin: Einaudi, 1980), p. 122.

Rome-Florence axis of Fascism, towards a Turin-Milan axis, which Pasolini even claimed had already achieved a hegemonic status.

È la rivincita dei periferici, insomma: è la vittoria dell'Italia reale su quella retorica: una prima ondata periferica romanesco-napoletana corrispondente al primo momento reale dell'Italia antifascista ma ancora semisviluppata e paleoborghese, e ora una seconda definitiva ondata settentrionale, corrispondente alla definitiva realtà italiana, quella che si può predicare all'Italia dell'imminente futuro.⁷

In a word, it is the revenge of the locals [*dei periferici* (of the peripherals)]: it is the victory of the real Italy over the rhetorical one – a first peripheral Roman-Neapolitan wave corresponding to the first real moment of an anti-Fascist but still semideveloped and paleobourgeois Italy, and now a second definitive northern wave, corresponding to the definitive Italian reality, the wave that can be proclaimed to the Italy of the imminent future.⁸

It is interesting to note here that Pasolini describes both the Rome-Naples axis and northern Italy as peripheries, even though Rome is the capital and northern Italy is a major economic centre. His real meaning is that they were once cultural peripheries, when Florence was the only cultural centre that mattered, during the period that the 'rhetorical' Italy dominated.

The struggle between rhetorical and real Italy is also the struggle between written and spoken language, a struggle between official and spontaneous cultures and ways of expression, and a struggle between minimal hegemonies and a potentially integral hegemony.

In 1976, an entire issue of *Il Contemporaneo*, a supplement to the Communist periodical *Rinascita*, was dedicated to the language question, and an interview with Tullio De Mauro depicted the growth and spread of the standard language as the empowerment of the

⁷ Pasolini, *Empirismo eretico*, p. 25.

⁸ Pasolini, *Heretical Empiricism*, p. 18.

subaltern classes, who now had access to the language that was once the sole domain of the educated and the powerful. De Mauro claimed that it was '*la partita decisiva dell'egemonia*' ('the decisive match of hegemony').⁹ As will be shown below, however, the war of position is not yet over; there remain some dissenting voices.

4.2 The continuum of varieties of Italian and new dialectal domains

In the mid-1970s, to reflect the new varieties of the Italian language, Alberto Mioni suggested a typology that included three main varieties of Italian and three main varieties of dialect.¹⁰ He ordered these repertoires according to prestige (see figure 4.1)

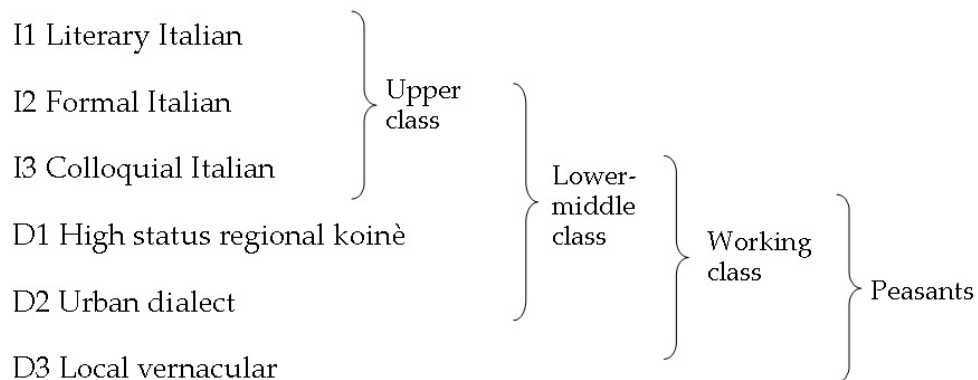


Figure 4.1 Mioni's 1975 stratification of standard Italian and dialects (after Tosi, p. 26).

Mioni indicated how different social groups could operate using a selection of these different repertoires. I1 (literary Italian) is only used in writing. The upper classes and upper-middle classes would be able to move between I1 and I3 (colloquial Italian), using I3 and D1 (high status regional koinè) for their less formal interactions, and they might be able to use D2

⁹ Interviewed in O. Cecchi, 'Gli italiani cominciano a capirsi', *Il Contemporaneo*, 24 December 1976, p. 20, cited in Marazzini, *Da Dante alla lingua selvaggia*, p. 206.

¹⁰ Alberto M. Mioni, 'Per una sociolinguistica italiana: Note di un non sociologo', in Joshua A. Fishman, *La sociologia del linguaggio* (Rome: Officina Edizioni, 1975), pp. 7-56.

(urban dialect) and D3 (local vernacular) for interactions with people from other groups.

Lower-middle class people might generally operate between I2 (formal Italian) and D2/D3, and may occasionally attempt I1. The working class sits approximately between I3 and D2 or D3, with peasants covering the whole dialect range, with occasional use of I3.

The typologies of the continuum between standard literary Italian and dialect can vary though, and they have changed over time. By the late 1980s, Gaetano Berruto was able to distinguish between six main forms of spoken standard Italian, not even including dialects.¹¹ These were:

1. *Italiano formale aulico* (dignified formal Italian: a modern *vulgare aulicum* (see 3.1 above))
2. *Italiano standard letterario* (literary standard Italian)
3. *Italiano neo-standard* (neo-standard Italian)
4. *Italiano parlato colloquiale* (spoken colloquial Italian)
5. *Italiano informale trascurato* (care-free informal Italian)
6. *Italiano popolare* (popular Italian)

In an architectural diagram of the Italian sociolinguistic situation, which also includes genre-specific varieties such as bureaucratic Italian and scientific Italian, Berruto considers the literary standard and the neo-standard to be at the centre of the model, with popular Italian and informal Italian towards the peripheries. Even the '*italiano formale aulico*' is accorded a position at the periphery though, albeit at the most formal end of the formality axis.¹² It would appear that Berruto's use of centre and periphery in this case is more related to

¹¹ Gaetano Berruto, *Sociolinguistica dell'italiano contemporaneo* (Rome: La Nuova Italia Scientifica, 1987; repr. Rome: Carocci, 1998), p. 38.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 21.

centrality of use rather than prestige and, furthermore, his model does exclude dialects. If dialects were to be included, the opposition would be likely to be between Italian at the centre and dialects at the peripheries.

In spite of the spread of the national language, dialects have demonstrated surprising enduring vitality. They are still relatively strong within the family domain, and they have also become part of young people's language, particularly in certain cities. The number of those speaking only dialect has gone down, and the number of those speaking only Italian has gone up, but it seems that dialects have found a new role to play as a language of family communication: not necessarily the sole language of communication in the family, but used alongside Italian (see the statistical data in 1.1 above). Dialects are often used interchangeably with Italian, through code switching and code mixing, although the use of dialect alternated with Italian is perhaps becoming more tokenistic as levels of dialect fluency decrease generationally. Furthermore, dialect use in the family domain may be reduced if family members come from different regions. The use of dialect is by no means necessarily connected to lower class status. Some in the upper classes have even returned to using dialect as a marker to distinguish them from lower social groups.¹³ Dialect names are also relatively common for restaurants and other near-horizon commercial premises.¹⁴ This use of dialects in the linguistic landscape (see 1.6 above) varies in extent on a regional basis, and there is a significant difference between their isolated use as creative shop names and their highly ideologically charged use in more official circumstances, as will be seen below.

In the same way that many who were once reported as literate could not speak Italian (see 3.4 above), not all dialect users today are fully conversant. Some dialect words may only

¹³ Marcato, *Dialetto, dialetti e italiano*, p. 18.

¹⁴ Carla Marcato, *Nomi di persona, nomi di luogo: Introduzione all'onomastica italiana* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2009), p. 211; p. 213.

be familiar to older generations.¹⁵ Although many children are now brought up as monolingual Italian speakers, some start to speak some dialect as teenagers, together with their friends and other peers. Especially since the 1960s, young people have been using dialects in this way that cuts across class divisions, as a marker of generational solidarity and as a way to invigorate their style. Dialect words can be used ironically or in jest, although such use may often only reinforce the subaltern position of dialects. The conscious use of dialect words, even if used rarely, can contribute to the regionally-defined dimension of a young person's identity.¹⁶ This adolescent adoption of dialect is more common with boys than with girls.¹⁷ This could be explained by the frequently perceived – at least by boys – connotations between dialect use, virility and aggression.¹⁸

In the light of the (re)emergence of new domains for dialects, Berruto has cautiously claimed that the new linguistic motto for many Italians might be *'ora che sappiamo parlare italiano, possiamo anche (ri)parlare dialetto'* ('now that we can speak Italian, we can speak dialect (again) too').¹⁹

4.3 Linguistic minorities in Italy, and dialects as minority languages

In addition to dialects, there are many linguistic minorities in Italy. Five of the twenty regions of Italy have special statutes that afford them a greater degree of autonomy: Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Sardinia, Sicily, Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtirol and the Aosta Valley. For

¹⁵ Marcato, *Dialetto, dialetti e italiano*, p. 23.

¹⁶ Giuseppe Antonelli, *L'italiano nella società della comunicazione* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2007), pp.31-32.

¹⁷ Marcato, *Dialetto, dialetti e italiano*, p. 41.

¹⁸ Michele A. Cortelazzo, 'La componente dialettale nella lingua delle giovani e dei giovani', in *Donna & linguaggio*, ed. by Gianna Marcato (Padua: CLEUP, 1995), pp. 581-586 (p. 585).

¹⁹ Gaetano Berruto, 'Parlare dialetto in Italia alle soglie del Duemila', in *La parola al testo: Scritti per Bice Mortara Garavelli*, ed. by Gian Luigi Beccaria and Carla Marengo, 2 vols (Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2002), I, pp. 33-50 (p. 48).

Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtirol and Aosta, this was largely due to their ethno-linguistic situations, as the protection of linguistic minorities in these areas was in fact a condition of their inclusion in Italian territory after the Second World War.²⁰ The political autonomy that these regions have is particularly evident in regional language legislation. French, for example, enjoys equal status with Italian in the Aosta Valley. The Austrian Government's official recognition in 1992 that Italy had fulfilled its obligations to the German-speaking minority of Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtirol served to end a period of public dissatisfaction with language policy among the German-speaking minority. Meanwhile, such a moment did not arrive for Friuli-Venezia Giulia before the dissolution of Yugoslavia, with which Italy had reached agreement regarding provisions for the Slovenian minority.²¹

At a national level, the generic nature of the guarantees in the Constitution to protect minority languages (see 3.7 above) may have been due to a desire to prevent irredentist tendencies.²² A first tentative push for the state to take more concrete measures came with an investigation into minority languages promoted by the Chamber of Deputies in 1971, subscribed to by Mario Lizziero of the Partito Comunista Italiano (Italian Communist Party) and Francesco Compagna of the Partito Repubblicano Italiano (Italian Republican Party – PRI), which was carried out by Tullio De Mauro.²³

Later in the 1970s, some began to view the ethno-linguistic minority regions as areas colonised by the Italian state, including Sergio Salvi (1932-), a journalist from the historical linguistic centre of Florence. In Salvi's *Le nazioni proibite*, for example, he describes the

²⁰ Gabriele Iannàccaro and Vittorio Dell'Aquila, *Modelli europei di pianificazione linguistica* (Vich-Vigo di Fassa: Istitut Cultural Ladin, 2001), p. 89.

²¹ Marazzini, *Da Dante alla lingua selvaggia*, pp. 196-197.

²² Guido Barbina, *La geografia delle lingue: Lingue, etnie e nazioni nel mondo contemporaneo* (Rome: La Nuova Italia Scientifica, 1993; repr. Rome: Carocci, 1998), p. 143.

²³ Marazzini, *Da Dante alla lingua selvaggia*, p. 200.

geography, ethnic composition, language, literature, history, economy, nationalist politics and flags of ten different stateless nations in western Europe, with the intention of bringing readers to call into question their assumed notions of nationality and official language. Each chapter opens with a map of the nation in question, followed by an etymological examination of the nation's name in its 'own' language. The maps he produces aim to redress the balance of place-names in favour of the minority language. For example, the map of 'Sardigna' (Sardinia; *Sardegna* in Italian) includes 'Tàtari (*Sassari*)', with the Sardinian name of the city in standard lettering and the Italian name in italics.²⁴ In 'Catalunya' (Catalonia; *Catalogna* in Italian), there is 'Alacant (*Alicante*)'.²⁵ In the case of 'Alba' (Scotland; *Scozia* in Italian), place-names are given in Gaelic with English names in brackets, for example 'Glaschu (*Glasgow*)' and even 'Baile na h-Eaglaise (*Kirkwall*)',²⁶ despite this latter name being of Old Norse origin. Salvi calls this an attempt to correct toponomastic imperialism.²⁷

Siccome questa guida, nonostante sia dedicata a popoli ed a territori estremamente concreti, assume [...] le tinte di un atlante immaginario, ci è piaciuto insistere su questo aspetto apparentemente fantastico e designare le nostre nazioni in maniera da ingarbugliarne ogni troppo rapida identificazione: nella speranza che in questo modo la curiosità e l'attenzione del lettore vengano stimulate.²⁸

Even though this guide is dedicated to extremely concrete peoples and territories, since it assumes [...] the look of an imaginary atlas, we wanted to insist on this apparently fantastical aspect and designate our nations in such a way so as to confuse any too rapid identification: in the hope that, in this way, the reader's curiosity and attention will be stimulated.

²⁴ Sergio Salvi, *Le nazioni proibite: Guida a dieci colonie 'interne' dell'Europa occidentale* (Florence: Vallecchi, 1973), p. 536.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. xix.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. xviii.

In this work, and in other works (see 4.4 below), Salvi gave considerable inspiration to the future projects of the Lega Nord.

It was at this time that Pasolini returned to the language question to express his abhorrence of the now televisual homologating standard of the Italian language: '*l'italiano orrendo della televisione*' ('the horrendous televisual Italian').²⁹ In the 1960s, although he had outlined the development of a technocratic standard that he claimed was the first truly national standard, he had already made it quite clear that he personally detested this neocapitalist bourgeois language.³⁰ Pasolini also wrote poetry in the Friulian language, as he spent most of his childhood in Friuli, his mother's native region. In October 1975, less than two weeks before he was murdered, Pasolini spoke on the issue of subaltern languages to an audience of school teachers gathered in Lecce, in Puglia, for a conference on dialects in education. He put forward, in strong terms, that the suppression of dialects amounted to '*genocidio*' ('genocide') committed by the forces of capitalist imperialism and consumerism. In a school system in which marks are awarded between one and ten, with ten being the highest, Pasolini argued that it was now right to give a mark of nine to a pupil whose work mixed Italian and dialect, and a mark of three to a pupil who spoke like Mike Bongiorno, a popular television host.³¹ He expressed a desire for political engagement to save dialects.

L'insegnamento e la protezione del dialetto o è diventato un fatto di tradizionalismo, di conservatorismo (che considero perfettamente sano, per le ragioni che esiste una 'destra sublime') oppure dovrebbe diventare profondamente rivoluzionario (qualcosa come è la difesa della propria lingua per i paesi baschi, oppure per gli irlandesi), deve arrivare al limite del separatismo, che sarebbe una lotta estremamente sana, perché questa lotta per il

²⁹ Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Volgar' eloquio*, ed. by Gian Carlo Ferretti (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1987), p. 31.

³⁰ Pasolini, *Empirismo eretico*, p. 29.

³¹ Pasolini, *Volgar' eloquio*, pp. 31-32.

separatismo non è altro che la difesa di quel pluralismo culturale, che è la realtà di una cultura.³²

The teaching and the protection of dialect either has become a matter of traditionalism, of conservatism (which I consider perfectly healthy, for the reason that there exists a 'sublime right') or it should become deeply revolutionary (something like the defence of the language is for the Basque Country, or for the Irish), it has to go to the edge of separatism, which would be an extremely healthy struggle, because this struggle for separatism is nothing but the defence of that cultural pluralism that is the reality of a culture.

It may almost seem here that Pasolini was encouraging the rise of a regionalist-separatist movement like the Lega Nord, but the Lega is not 'deeply revolutionary' in the sense that Pasolini intended, as will be seen below. The negative attitude of the Lega to southern Italians and to immigrants also demonstrates that they could not easily be described as defenders of cultural pluralism.

Between 1991 and 1992, it seemed that a bill on the protection of minority languages was about to be enacted in law by the Italian Parliament, having been approved by the Chamber of Deputies two decades on from the exploratory report mentioned above. As the bill included reference to Sardinian and Friulian, seen by some as dialects of Italian, it could have been argued that Lombard and Venetan were equally deserving of recognition.³³ At the beginning of 1991, the Lega Nord had been formed by the amalgamation of regional leagues into a federal structure, headed by the increasingly successful Lega Lombarda (Lombard League), and this apparently led many journalists to the conclusion that the proposed law would be a boost to the autonomist aims of the Lega. They called on left-wing politicians to

³² Ibid., p. 32.

³³ Anna Laura Lepschy, Giulio Lepschy and Miriam Voghera, 'Linguistic Variety in Italy', in *Italian Regionalism: History, Identity and Politics*, ed. by Carl Levy (Oxford: Berg, 1996), pp. 69-80 (p. 77).

stop the law. Guido Barbina lists some sample headlines on the issue, demonstrating how rhetoric was ramped up, based on the old hegemonic notion of dialects as inferior and backward, as well as potentially divisive: *'Il dialetto a scuola, che sbaglio'* ('Dialect at school, what a mistake'), *'Così somigliamo alla Jugoslavia'* ('This is how we resemble Yugoslavia'), *'L'unità nazionale in pasto alle leghe'* ('National unity served up to the leagues [i.e. Lega Nord]'), *'Così il Paese torna al passato'* ('So the Country [sic] goes back to the past'), *'Un cedimento al leghismo'* ('Caving in to Leghism [the ideology of the Lega]'), *'Scelta politica inaccettabile'* ('Unacceptable political choice') and *'Con il dialetto non si fa molta strada'* ('You won't get far with dialect').³⁴ As well as the media furore, the bill was eventually postponed by the dissolution of Parliament and did not reach the Senate. Tullio De Mauro lamented that the reaction to this law reflected deep culturally rooted prejudices, and that it was the worst case in Italy of intolerance of different cultures and languages since Fascism.³⁵

In 1999, Law 482 on the 'protection of historical linguistic minorities' was finally ratified. While the law does not explicitly define what is meant by a historical linguistic minority, its Article 2 gives a list of twelve minorities, in the following order: Albanian, Catalan, German, Greek, Slovene, Croatian, French, Franco-Provençal, Friulian, Ladin, Occitan/Provençal and Sardinian. The first six are defined in Article 2 as ethnic groups, described as *'popolazioni'* ('populations'), while the remainder are defined linguistically, as populations speaking the languages in question.³⁶ Apart from this confusing distinction made in Article 2, however, the law does not treat either one of these groups differently from the other.

³⁴ Barbina, p. 145.

³⁵ Tullio De Mauro, 'La questione della lingua', in *La cultura italiana del Novecento*, ed. by Corrado Stajano (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1996), pp. 423-444 (p. 441).

³⁶ Vittorio Dell'Aquila and Gabriele Iannàccaro, *La pianificazione linguistica: Lingue, società e istituzioni* (Rome: Carocci, 2004), p. 56.

Criticisms have been levelled at the law for specifying which minorities it exists to protect, as this means that other minorities are expressly not protected. Some linguistic varieties that were not included might have had a strong case for inclusion. Piedmontese, for example, is seen by many as a dialect, but it has a history of standardisation sufficient to be classified as an *Ausbau* language (see 1.4 above). On the other hand, Ladin is protected, even though it is quite closely related to one of the other protected languages, Friulian, sometimes known as Eastern Ladin. The ambiguity of the decisions in the law is reflected by the existence of *Wikipedia* editions in different languages. All of the languages covered by the law do have editions of *Wikipedia*, except Ladin; but editions are also available in Lombard, Piedmontese, Neapolitan, Sicilian, Ligurian, Venetan and Emiliano-Romagnolo. These have also encouraged a large number of contributions: the Piedmontese edition currently (in January 2011) has more articles than those in Welsh, Icelandic or Albanian, and the Lombard edition is larger than those in Gujarati, Cantonese or Urdu.

With the law restricted to focusing on 'historical' or 'territorial' minorities, it also makes no provision for the protection of newer linguistic minorities or travelling minorities, such as the 100,000 Roma in Italy.³⁷ An earlier draft of the law had included Romany, but the language was excluded from the final version.³⁸ Clivio criticises the inclusion of Sardinian, as there is not currently a single unified regional koinè, and some of the various Sardinian dialects are distant enough from each other as to prevent intercomprehension.³⁹

³⁷ Fiorenzo Toso, 'Dialecto e legislazione', in *I dialetti italiani: Storia struttura uso*, ed. by Manlio Cortelazzo and others (Turin: UTET, 2002), pp. 1063-1072 (p. 1064-1065).

³⁸ Leonardo M. Savoia, 'La legge 482 sulle minoranze linguistiche storiche: Le lingue di minoranza e le varietà non standard in Italia', *Rivista italiana di dialettologia*, 25 (2001), 7-50 (p. 15).

³⁹ Gianrenzo P. Clivio, 'Pulizia linguistica o ecologia linguistica?', in *Transitions: Prospettive di studio sulle trasformazioni letterarie e linguistiche nella cultura italiana*, ed. by Kevin B. Reynolds and others (Fiesole: Cadmo, 2004), pp. 55-64 (p. 60).

Following the approval of this law, certain municipalities sought to be ascribed minority language status, occasionally for little more than touristic purposes or in a belief that they could benefit from the provisions of Law 482 in other ways. When some municipalities in Liguria exaggerated by identified themselves as Occitan/Provençal-speaking, the Supreme Court of Cassation saw fit to pass a judgment in 2003 making it, in effect, illegal for municipalities to declare that they belong to a given linguistic area if scientific and public opinion maintain the opposite.⁴⁰

In light of such problems even with a law that specifies the languages to which it applies, Toso claims that there is some practical legitimacy in distinguishing between languages and dialects when legislating for minority languages.⁴¹ Still, the distinction remains ambiguous, as the cases mentioned above of Piedmontese, Ladin, Friulian and Sardinian demonstrate. Italy and Norway are both signatories of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML), Article 1 of which states that its provisions do not apply to 'dialects of the official language(s) of the State'. In the case of Italy, this is complicated by the fact that it is difficult to determine whether many dialects are dialects of Italian or merely dialects of Italy, especially as the Italian language was itself once just one of many Italo-Romance dialects.

Furthermore, the stipulation in the ECRML assumes that all states have official languages, whereas in many cases languages are official only on a de facto basis, not de jure. In the United Kingdom, for example, English is essentially only a de facto official language. The Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 conferred official status upon Gaelic in Scotland, and stated that the language commands 'equal respect' to English, which could be read as an

⁴⁰ Fiorenzo Toso, *Le minoranze linguistiche in Italia* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2008), p. 64.

⁴¹ Toso, 'Dialecto e legislazione', p. 1065.

affirmation of the official status of English as well. The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure was passed by the Welsh Assembly in December 2010, affording official status to Welsh in Wales. It is a little less generous to English than the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act, stating that Welsh is to be treated 'no less favourably' than English. Perhaps the strongest legal statement regarding the status of the English language is found in the British Nationality Act 1981, which requires those who wish to become British citizens by naturalisation to possess knowledge of English, Welsh or Gaelic. In Italy, Article 1 of Law 482 on minority languages declared Italian to be the official language of the Republic, but many parliamentarians would like to see this stated in the Constitution, and several bills have been put forward to that effect (see 4.4.7 below).

A number of regions and provinces have passed propositions favouring dialects, but these are most often concerned with treating dialects as cultural heritage instead of the official recognition or institutional use of dialects. Some, for example, have encouraged programmes to introduce dialect projects in schools, while others have offered financial support for researchers, publishers or theatrical groups working with dialects.⁴²

It only takes a leap of imagination to promote a dialect to the status of a language (see 1.4-1.5 above), but can dialects be considered minority languages? The following account of the Lega Nord will be focused particularly on Lombardy where, according to data from a survey in 2000, 38.6% of people regularly speak dialect (either solely dialect or dialect in alternation with Italian) with other family members, which would make Lombard a minority language by statistical definition. Most importantly, however, the subaltern status of dialects (see 2.2.3 above) means that they are minorised in the attitudes of many people. The following sections will demonstrate how the Lega Nord has sought to benefit from the

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 1068-1069.

peripheral connotations of dialects by making the language question one of their most iconic policy areas.

4.4 The Lega Nord

Lombardy has been at the forefront of political change since the 1960s.⁴³ The first centre-left coalitions were born in Milan, and the post-1968 youth movements were strong in the region. The *mani pulite* (clean hands) corruption trials of the 1990s were centred on Milan, as was the political career of Bettino Craxi (1934-2000), the former prime minister of Italy disgraced by those same trials, who fled to Tunisia in 1994. The property and media empire of Silvio Berlusconi (1936-) began in Milan, where Berlusconi later established his Forza Italia (Come On Italy) party, which swept to power in 1994. Lombardy is also home to the Lega Nord, although the Lega is the only one of these political movements to be born not in Milan, but in its hinterland. The Lega Nord was officially formed in 1991 as a result of the amalgamation of various regional *leghe* (leagues). The Lega Lombarda (Lombard League), which was founded officially in 1984 but originally appeared in 1982 as the Lega Autonomista Lombarda (Lombard Autonomist League), would be the hegemon in the new party, mainly due to the fact that its architect, Umberto Bossi (1941-), was made Federal Secretary of the Lega Nord upon its creation.⁴⁴ Bossi's power was strengthened as he

⁴³ Roberto Biorcio, 'La società civile e la politica: Dagli anni del boom a fine millennio', in *Storia d'Italia: Le regioni dall'Unità a oggi – La Lombardia*, ed. by Duccio Bigazzi and Marco Meriggi (Turin: Einaudi, 2001), pp. 1025-1064 (p. 1027).

⁴⁴ Thomas W. Gold, *The Lega Nord and Contemporary Politics in Italy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 86-87.

marginalised the former leaders of the *leghe* of Piedmont and Veneto.⁴⁵ He remains the leader of the party to the present day.

The Lega has enjoyed varying levels of electoral success, but its rise to power was swift. The Liga Veneta (Venetan League) was founded in 1980, and in 1983 it already had one representative elected to the Chamber of Deputies and one to the Senate, followed by two regional councillors in 1985. The Lega Lombarda had one provincial representative (for Varese) and two municipal councillors (in Gallarate and Varese) elected in 1985, and one deputy and one senator (Umberto Bossi) elected for the first time in 1987. At the European parliamentary elections of 1989, the *leghe* presented a united list under the title Lega Lombarda – Alleanza Nord (Lombard League – North Alliance) and had two members elected. The Lega is currently part of the Europe of Freedom and Democracy group in the European Parliament, which also includes other populist parties such as the United Kingdom Independence Party and the Dansk Folkeparti (Danish People's Party). It was initially a component of the Rainbow Group and the European Free Alliance with other nationalist or regionalist parties including the Scottish National Party and the Partito Sardo d'Azione (Sardinian Action Party), but the Lega was suspended from this group in 1994. The reason for its suspension was apparently connected to domestic politics, as that year the Lega participated in forming Berlusconi's first government coalition, the Polo delle Libertà (Pole of Freedoms), which also included the Alleanza Nazionale (National Alliance – AN) grouping, featuring a number of post-fascist politicians. The Lega then had 117 deputies and 56 senators, and its new power was demonstrated most dramatically when it played a

⁴⁵ Margarita Gómez-Reino Cachafeiro, *Ethnicity and Nationalism in Italian Politics: Inventing the Padania – Lega Nord and the Northern Question* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), p. 110.

significant role in the fall of the coalition, partly due to its fear of becoming subaltern to Berlusconi's Forza Italia and potentially being incorporated into his party.⁴⁶

Since then, the Lega has played the role of kingmaker in Berlusconi's other two governing coalitions (2001-2006 and 2008-). In the 2008 general election, the party won 8.3% of the national vote despite not standing in all regions, and in 2010 it even launched a section in Sardinia to stand for provincial elections.

The first issue of the Lega Lombarda's newspaper *Lombardia Autonomista*, edited by Bossi, began with a statement underlining both the lack of a clear political orientation in the Lega and the importance they ascribed to ethnicity or provenance, before moving on to their main counter-hegemonic and autonomist aims, even using the key Gramscian term, albeit written with a stress-marked vowel that Gramsci did not use.

Non importa che età avete, che lavoro fate, di che tendenza politica siete: quello che importa è che siete – e che siamo – tutti Lombardi. [...] Il nostro fondamentale interesse comune è la liberazione della Lombardia dalla vorace e soffocante egemonia del governo centralista di Roma, attraverso l'autonomia lombarda nel più vasto contesto dell'autonomia padano-alpina.⁴⁷

It does not matter how old you are, what job you do, what your political tendency is: what matters is that you are – and that we are – all Lombards. [...] Our fundamental common interest is the liberation of Lombardy from the voracious and suffocating hegemony of the centralist government in Rome, through Lombard autonomy in the wider context of Padanian-Alpine autonomy.

In fact, in their early years, despite no apparent direct references to Gramsci, the Lega made frequent use of the notion of hegemony to describe both the Italian political class and southerners in general and the centralisation agenda as opposed to their protest from the

⁴⁶ Biorcio, 'La società civile e la politica', p. 1062.

⁴⁷ *Lombardia Autonomista*, 'Lega Autonomista Lombarda', 1 (March 1982), p. 1.

'periphery'. Bossi has stated that the line he has always wanted the Lega to take has been '*il progetto egemonico*' ('the hegemonic project').⁴⁸

The Lega originally supported the establishment of federalism in Italy. Carlo Cattaneo (see 3.4 above) had argued for a federalist structure upon the Unification of Italy, but the centralist, unitary solution prevailed. In September 1996, however, Bossi unilaterally proclaimed the independence of the secessionist 'Repubblica Federale della Padania' ('Federal Republic of Padania') at a ritual held at the mouth of the River Po, in Venice. In spite of the lack of a history of common borders on which the separatist-nationalist identity of 'Padania' could be constructed, and dubious grounds for ethnic difference, the Lega has attempted to create symbolic boundaries for Padania through the selection of 'criteria of inclusion and exclusion' that they see as essential to the definition of their claimed space. These boundaries are mainly defined by 'sets of polar oppositions' that constitute 'criteria of purity'.⁴⁹ With these boundaries, the Lega sought to establish what they saw as the 'otherness' of the North.⁵⁰ This 'otherness' is in opposition both to the rest of Italy and to the rest of Europe, and the world, although the Lega frequently claims to share in the struggle of other 'oppressed peoples'. One key symbolic boundary could of course be linguistic:

L'uso del dialetto come lingua della fiducia accentua l'opposizione fra interni ed esterni, e rende più facile considerare gli impiegati statali – un gruppo in cui gli estranei, soprattutto gli italiani del Sud, tendono a essere sovrarappresentati – come intrusi.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Umberto Bossi and Daniele Vimercati, *Vento dal Nord: La mia Lega la mia vita* (Milan: Sperling & Kupfer, 1992), p. 73.

⁴⁹ Damian Tambini, *Nationalism in Italian Politics: The Stories of the Northern League, 1980-2000* (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 18-19.

⁵⁰ Gómez-Reino Cachafeiro, p. 117.

⁵¹ Michel Huyseune, *Modernità e secessione: Le scienze sociali e il discorso politico della Lega Nord* (Rome: Carocci, 2004), p. 161.

The use of dialect as the language of trust accentuates the opposition between insiders and outsiders, and it makes it easier to consider public servants – a group in which outsiders, especially southern Italians, tend to be over-represented – as intruders.

As part of two further Berlusconi governments in the 2000s, the Lega has had to moderate its secessionist discourse to some extent, but Padanian 'national-federal' identity is still of great importance to the movement. As will be seen below, linguistic differences have been a central part of the Lega's imagined nationhood. The Lega has also frequently attempted to reinforce regional stereotypes to highlight the differences between northern and southern Italy, mainly through its propaganda instruments: principally posters, newspapers, speeches and graffiti, but also its own radio station and television channel. According to the Lega's world-view, the North is rich and the South is poor, northern Italians have a more diligent work ethic than southern Italians, and the inhabitants of northern Italy are descended from Celts, whereas southern Italians are described as 'Africans'.⁵²

The Celtic mythic image has, in recent years, achieved a prominence in the Lega's identity almost equal to that of dialects.⁵³ Bossi is often referred to by the epithet *il Senatur* (the Senator) – although *il Senatür* would be more phonetically accurate in his own dialect – and this nickname has stuck even since his move from the Senate to the Chamber of Deputies.⁵⁴ In March 2005, however, another nickname was used when Bossi made his first public appearance in over a year, following a long hospitalisation. Rosi Mauro, Secretary of the Sindacato Padano (Padanian Trade Union), said that '*Bossi è immortale, è un highlander*'

⁵² Tambini, p. 19.

⁵³ Guy Puzey, 'Forza Scozia!', *Scottish Left Review*, 42 (2007), 14-15.

⁵⁴ Maria Pia Pozzato, 'Fashion and Political Communication in the 1980s and 1990s', in *The Art of Persuasion: Political Communication in Italy from 1945 to the 1990s*, ed. by Luciano Cheles and Lucio Sponza (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), pp. 286-298 (p. 298).

(‘Bossi is immortal, he’s a Highlander’).⁵⁵ The Lega aspires to develop links with what it considers to be fellow ‘Celtic’ nations, including Scotland. Saltire flags are a common sight at Lega events, and members of the Movimento Giovani Padani (Young Padanians Movement – MGP), the youth wing of the Lega, often quote Mel Gibson’s film *Braveheart* (1995) (see figure 4.2 below).



Figure 4.2 An online advertisement for the first ‘national’ conference of the Giovani Liguri (Young Ligurians), 25 March 2006. The advertisement includes the flag of Liguria and, next to the image of Mel Gibson, a quote from the film *Braveheart*: ‘They may take our lives, but they will never take our freedom’. In the top-left is the MGP’s symbol, featuring the green Alpine sun – a purportedly Celtic symbol – and Alberto da Giussano, a warrior who is said to have fought for the original Lombard League (an alliance of northern Italian city states in the twelfth century). The statue of Alberto da Giussano in Legnano inspired his use in the symbol of the Lega Nord itself.⁵⁶ Image from the MGP website: <http://www.giovanipadani.leganord.org/img/congressomgpliguria.jpg> [accessed 10 January 2011].

⁵⁵ Cited in Maurizio Lucchi, ‘Ritorno nel segno del mito e della continuità’, *La Prealpina*, 7 March 2005, p. 3.

⁵⁶ Bossi and Vimercati, p. 41.

An image from the film also appears prominently on the banner of their website's home page with, at the bottom of the same page, an extended version of the quotation from the film featured in the figure below, attributed by the MGP directly to William Wallace. The newsletter of the Como provincial MGP is also entitled *Braveheart*, and the Lega's main television advert for the 2008 elections was clearly inspired by the film.

The Lega's admiration for William Wallace is part of a wider interest in ancient or medieval symbols and mythology. One nickname for the Lega, encouraged by the Lega itself, is '*il Carroccio*', after a 'standard-bearing wagon towed into battle by the armies of medieval city states'.⁵⁷ In terms of ancient non-Celtic mythology, one Milanese youth section is named after Thor, the Norse god of thunder.

The Scottish Parliament is frequently seen by Leghists as one model that could be adopted in Italy, although the powers of the Italian regions are arguably already more far-reaching in some respects than the Scottish devolution settlement.⁵⁸ The Scottish model is said to have had a particular appeal for the Lega when, in the wake of its unilateral declaration of independence, it found it necessary to pursue less drastic steps towards achieving greater autonomy. The English word *devolution* was first used extensively by the Lega in 1998, not long after the referendum on devolution in Scotland in September 1997. Vandelli puts forward that, apart from its topicality, there were three main reasons for the use of the English word. Firstly, it seemed innovative, as it was part of the language of Tony Blair, seen at that time in many parts of Europe as a moderniser. Secondly, it was reassuring, as it was connected to the UK, seen as a '*democrazia forte e coesa*' ('strong and cohesive

⁵⁷ Tambini, p. 158.

⁵⁸ Luciano Vandelli, *Devolution e altre storie: Paradossi, ambiguità e rischi di un progetto politico* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2002), pp. 17-18.

democracy').⁵⁹ Thirdly, it was full of fascination for the Lega, as it represented '*l'orgoglio di un popolo fiero e glorioso, con una tradizione rivendicativa fortemente sottolineata da mitologie nazionali e da figure simboliche*' ('the pride of a valiant and glorious people with a traditional claim heavily underscored by national mythologies and symbolic figures').⁶⁰

The Lega has a very strongly regional identity, but its political identity is not as clear. This is partly a conscious strategy on the part of the Lega. Gianfranco Miglio (1918-2001), a federalist political scientist who has achieved the status almost of an ideologue for the Lega even though he had disagreements with Bossi, advised the Lega in 1990 to differentiate itself from other parties.⁶¹ It had to stress its differences from the more traditional parties precisely at the moment that those other parties were facing their greatest crises. The leader of the Partito Comunista Italiano (Italian Communist Party – PCI) had decided that, with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the party's name, symbols and form would have to change in order to remain a major force in Italian politics, as it had been since the Second World War. The official successor party was the Partito Democratico della Sinistra (Democratic Party of the Left), but a number of former PCI members formed an alternative party, the Partito della Rifondazione Comunista (Communist Refoundation Party – PRC). The Centre-Right, on the other hand, was thoroughly discredited when the *Tangentopoli* (Bribesville) corruption scandals came to light, through the trials that began in 1992.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 26.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Gianfranco Miglio, *Io, Bossi e la Lega: Diario segreto dei miei quattro anni sul Carroccio* (Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori, 1994), p. 18.

The party portrayed traditional political distinctions as a way in which the old parties had endeavoured to split the 'Lombard people'.⁶²

Per i lombardi oggi non è certo preminente la lotta di classe bensì la lotta per liberarsi dall'avidità del centralismo romano e dei suoi partiti.⁶³

For the Lombards today, the class struggle is certainly not pre-eminent; rather it is the struggle to free themselves from the greed of Roman centralism and its parties.

As class-based and religious cleavages became less important for many Italians, especially after the end of the Cold War, the cleavage between territorial centres and peripheries would have great potential for party mobilisation.⁶⁴ The Lega was poised to take full advantage of this. In spite of its denial of class differences, the party's high esteem for the 'common man', supposedly with a strong link to his roots (and the emphasis is primarily on 'him' instead of 'her') and who is tired of old-fashioned political wrangling and of progressive intellectuals struck home with many in northern Italy, especially among small-scale entrepreneurs, but also with workers and farmers.⁶⁵

While the big parties that rose out of the ashes of the First Republic have either changed their names and identities or merged with others, the Lega has kept the same form and is now the oldest large party to be sitting in both chambers of the Italian Parliament. As

⁶² Roberto Biorcio, 'La Lega come attore politico: Dal federalismo al populismo regionalista', in *La Lega Lombarda*, ed. by Renato Mannheimer (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1991), pp. 34-82 (pp. 78-79).

⁶³ Umberto Bossi, interviewed in *Il Gazzettino della Val Bossa*, November 1986; repr. as 'Il primato dei popoli: Intervista al fondatore della Lega Lombarda', *Lombardia Autonomista*, 30 January 1987, p. 4.

⁶⁴ Roberto Biorcio, 'La società civile e la politica', p. 1052.

⁶⁵ Marco Tarchi, 'Italy: A Country of Many Populisms', in *Twenty-First Century Populism: The Spectre of Western European Democracy*, ed. by Daniele Albertazzi and Duncan McDonnell (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 84-99 (p. 88).

Benedicenti underlines, it is also unique among the large parties in having its own newspaper, television channel and radio station, all of which have an editorial line that entirely coincides with the party line.⁶⁶ Although Berlusconi has a vast media empire, it is not directly associated with his party, but more with him as an individual or with his family. The Lega has also established an extensive network of Padanian voluntary associations, including a trade union, sports clubs, groups for infants, an association for collectors, cultural groups, religious associations, a humanitarian aid organisation, a group for blood donations, the Guardia Nazionale Padana (Padanian National Guard), an environmental association and an association for pet-lovers. Such a network has no real equivalent in Italian politics today. The Lega has advertised its activism as a positive lifestyle choice, for example an early newspaper recommended that parents sign up their children to the Lega's youth group with the slogan '*l'identità etnica difende tuo figlio dalla droga*' ('ethnic identity protects your child from drugs').⁶⁷

In spite of the uncertain political identity of the Lega's early years, the Lega has increasingly established itself on the far right, not least due to its ethnocentrism and its anti-immigration policies. Its cultural references have also contributed to defining the party's political alignment: *Braveheart* has, for example, been described as 'the modern "Ur-Fascist" text *par excellence*'.⁶⁸ The Lega's cultural policies have also changed significantly since 11 September 2001, when the Lega began to tone down its previous criticism of Americanisation and replaced this with a new anti-Islamic campaign.⁶⁹ Angelo Alessandri, a high-ranking member of the Lega, described the party's faith orientation as a mixture of

⁶⁶ Donato Bendicenti, 'La Lega senza secessione', *Il Mulino*, 427 (2006), 924-931 (p. 929).

⁶⁷ *Lombardia Autonomista*, 31 (August 1985), p. 4.

⁶⁸ Colin McArthur, *Brigadoon, Braveheart and the Scots: Distortions of Scotland in Hollywood Cinema* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2003), p. 208.

⁶⁹ Tarchi, p. 91.

Catholicism and rediscovered Celtic rites, and said that their fundamentalism has supported their '*lotta di sempre: quella contro gli islamici*' ('eternal struggle: that against Islamists').⁷⁰

Sometimes, the Lega has used dialect to explain its point of view on immigration, creating proverbial-sounding phrases such as '*Quei che ghem, ghem, i alter a ca' soa*' ('The ones we've got can stay, the rest can go home').⁷¹ Through the use of dialect, such statements may be made to sound, to many people, more sincere, while also appealing to a popular idea of ancestral common-sense. This is a widespread point of reference for supporters of the Lega.

As one of them puts it:

[...] soffermiamoci a ricordare una [sic] passato vicino di quando la saggezza degli anziani che si esprimevano nel loro idioma naturale, forniva quel pane di vita da cui si traeva un carattere e una volontà.⁷²

[...] let us stop to remember a recent past when the wisdom of the elders, who expressed themselves in their natural idiom, supplied that bread of life from which we derived our character and our willpower.

4.4.1 Autonomist antecedents

The autonomist movement centred on Lombardy was not without antecedents in other parts of Italy. Five regions of Italy have autonomous status, three of which involve potentially irredentist linguistic minorities along Italy's land borders with Austria, France and Slovenia (see 4.3 above), while the other two are the insular regions Sardinia and Sicily. By the early 1970s, southern Italian separatism was growing, with the foundation of the Movimento dei

⁷⁰ Cited in Marco Cremonesi, 'Bossi alla notte di Halloween: E la Lega si riscopre "celtica"', *Corriere della Sera*, 31 October 2007, p. 13.

⁷¹ Cited by Giorgio Guaiti, *Il Giorno*, 16 May 1990, cited in *Arrivano i barbari*, ed. by Ambrogio Fusella (Milan: Rizzoli, 1993), p. 42.

⁷² Anna Galdini, letter to *Lombardia Autonomista*, 5.13-18 (September 1987), p. 5.

contadini e dei proletari del Mezzogiorno e delle isole (the Peasants' and Proletarians' Movement of the South and the Islands) in 1972.⁷³ Southern separatism or independentism was nothing new, however, with the Partito Sardo d'Azione, for example, founded in 1921. As a young man, Gramsci had frequently used the slogan '*Al mare i continentali!*' ('Throw the continentals overboard!'), but he later believed that Sardinian independence would not solve the class divisions of the island.⁷⁴ In the 1950s, northern regionalists had begun to organise politically, with approximately one hundred local sections of the Movimento per l'autonomia regionale piemontese (Movement for Piedmontese Regional Autonomy – MARP) set up between 1955 and 1956, and sister movements growing in Liguria and in the Province of Bergamo in Lombardy. The Piedmontese movement was relatively successful in local elections, gaining 5.8% of the vote in the Turin municipal elections of 1956.⁷⁵ MARP later became the Movimento Autonomista Regionale Padano (Padanian Regional Autonomist Movement), with reference to the *Val padana* (Padanian Valley) or the *Pianura padana* (Padanian Plain), alternative names for the Po Valley. With this change, the movement hoped to extend its territorial reach, but its attempt to contest national elections was unsuccessful, and the movement dissolved.⁷⁶

The roots of many separatist or autonomist movements lie in factors such as a history of nationhood, common borders or ethnicity, imbalances in development, discontent with bureaucracy or anti-colonialism.⁷⁷ The autonomism of the Piedmontese movement grew

⁷³ Sergio Salvi, *Le lingue tagliate: Storia delle minoranze linguistiche in Italia* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1975), p. 83.

⁷⁴ Gramsci, *Lettere 1908-1926*, p. 271.

⁷⁵ Elisabetta Rosaspina, 'Bossi trova fra i "Marpioni" i precursori del Carroccio', *Corriere della Sera*, 11 April 1994, p. 46.

⁷⁶ Salvi, *Le lingue tagliate*, p. 83.

⁷⁷ Anthony D. Smith, 'Towards a Theory of Ethnic Separatism', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 2 (1979), 21-37.

from discontent with what they saw as economic redistribution instigated in 1950 with the establishment by the Italian Government of the Cassa per il Mezzogiorno (Fund for the South), which sought to improve the infrastructure and economy of impoverished southern Italy. Some in northern Italy believed they were paying high taxes that were being spent disproportionately on southern Italy, and MARP is said to have coined the slogan '*Roma ladrona*' ('Thieving Rome'), which the Lega would later use extensively, also in the variant form of '*Roma padrona*' ('Rome the boss').⁷⁸ There was also antagonism from some northerners towards the mass post-war migration from southern Italy to the northern conurbations. In the wake of the dissolution of MARP, the Movimento Autonomista Libera Padania (Free Padania Autonomist Movement) was established in Milan, mainly based around this anti-southerner polemic.⁷⁹

In the early 1970s, the seeds were being sown for modern radical northern autonomism, although the movement was at that time '*microscopico*' ('microscopic').⁸⁰ In 1967, the Association internationale pour la défense des langues et des cultures menacées (International Association for the Defence of Threatened Languages and Cultures – AIDLCM) was founded, and this established an activist agenda for the promotion of dialects as regional languages. The secretary of the Italian section of this international association was Gustavo Buratti (1932-2009), a teacher and one of the organisers of the Lecce conference on dialects attended by Pasolini in 1975 (see 4.3 above). At that conference, he spoke of some of his activities.

Mi trovo a dover lavorare fino a mezzanotte a Biella per insegnare
agli extraparlamentari – per la verità i compagni del PCI non

⁷⁸ Sergio Scarrone, interviewed in Rosaspina.

⁷⁹ Salvi, *Le lingue tagliate*, p. 83.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

vengono – a fare dei giornalini in piemontese. Mi vengono a dire – e sono operai, gente che ha ancora le vacche in casa – che vogliono scrivere in piemontese, vogliono dire qualcosa di nuovo, e questo è il discorso dei baschi: stavano perdendo la lingua e i giovani baschi la reimparano. A questo punto, non è un recupero da museo [...] ma è la scoperta di un'arma; quindi non è tanto una sopravvivenza, quanto scoprire che c'è un deposito d'armi lì, e penso che ai corsari le armi possono servire.⁸¹

I find myself having to work until midnight at Biella teaching extra-parliamentarians [political activists] – to tell the truth the comrades of the PCI don't come – how to make newsletters in Piedmontese. They come and tell me – and they're workers, people who still have cattle in their homes – that they want to learn to write in Piedmontese, they want to say something new, and this is the case of the Basques: they were losing their language and the young Basques are learning it again. At this point, it is not salvaging something for a museum [...] but it is the discovery of a weapon; so it is not so much a case of survival, rather a case of discovering that there is a deposit of weapons there, and I think that corsairs can find a use for those weapons.

The interest in regional languages was so strong in Piedmont that it had by then led to the formation of two new political movements. Buratti was a leader of one of these, the Associassion Liber Piemònt (Free Piedmont Association – ALP), which used as its symbol the red, blue and orange tricolour of the short-lived Jacobin Republic of Alba (1796). Salvi characterises ALP as a Marxist-Leninist movement aiming to pursue the *'rivendicazioni "terzomondistiche" della montagna e delle campagne piemontesi tanto contro lo stato italiano quanto contro la metropoli regionale'* ("Third World" claims of the Piedmontese mountain and rural areas as much against the Italian state as against the regional metropolis'), while also seeking an organic link with southern migrants.⁸² Buratti went on to be a regional secretary of the Partito Socialista Italiano (Italian Socialist Party – PSI), although he would later join the Federazione dei Verdi (Federation of the Greens – FdV). The other movement to appear at

⁸¹ Cited in Pasolini, *Volgar' eloquio*, pp. 77-78.

⁸² Salvi, *Le lingue tagliate*, p. 84.

the time was Assion Piemontèisa (Piedmontese Action), a right-wing movement that took up the anti-southerner sentiment of MARP. Its symbol was the Savoian flag of Piedmont, which is today the region's official flag. Both these organisations published periodicals in a Piedmontese koinè, and they preferred to refer to this as a regional language instead of a dialect.⁸³

The linguist Paolo Coluzzi recognises the importance of a change in terminology in order to reverse language shift from dialects. He puts forward that it would be more appropriate to call the more local dialects, such as Milanese, dialects of a Western Lombard regional language, which is in turn a dialect of a Northern Italian, Gallo-Italian or Padanian 'virtual language'.⁸⁴ His argument is based both on the fact that it is linguistically incorrect to call a dialect such as Milanese a dialect of Italian – as Italian is itself based on one of many dialects in Italy – and on a desire to escape the negative connotations of the word 'dialect'. Arguably, the Norwegian case will demonstrate that there is nothing wrong with the term 'dialect' in itself, if more general social and cultural attitudes can be changed.

Writing in 1975, Salvi claimed that there were no other movements seeking to find a new political-cultural meaning for northern dialects, although he notes the recent formation of organisations in both Lombardy and Veneto. The Venetan group was producing a periodical named *Popolo Veneto* (Venetan People), while the Lombard group was a section of AIDLCM for Lombardy and Italian-speaking Switzerland that sought to create a macroregional koinè for north-western Italy and southern Switzerland that could then be the basis for a Padanian sense of nationhood centred on Lombardy.⁸⁵

⁸³ Ibid., pp. 83-84.

⁸⁴ Paolo Coluzzi, 'Endangered Minority and Regional Languages ("Dialects") in Italy', *Modern Italy*, 14 (2009), 39-54 (p. 45).

⁸⁵ Salvi, *Le lingue tagliate*, p. 84.

It is clear that these early northern separatist movements had begun to portray northern Italy as a periphery subjected to the hegemony of the political capital Rome. The Unification of Italy was, however, driven to a large extent by the interest of former states in northern Italy, not least the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia, the capital of which, Turin, was also the first capital of unified Italy. As for Lombardy, it has played a role of social, political and cultural centrality in terms of its historical development tied to the centre of Europe, the cosmopolitan nature of Milan, and the relatively early introduction of education and industrialisation there. Lurati states that it is a peripheral region '*solo in rapporto al modello linguistico fiorentino*' ('only with regard to the Florentine linguistic model').⁸⁶

4.4.2 The role of dialects in the formation of the Lega

The Società Filologica Veneta (Venetan Philological Society) was set up in Veneto in 1977 under the guidance of Franco Rocchetta. It was intended to support and maintain Venetan dialects and culture, and it produced leaflets in Venetan, as well as stickers that began to be visible in public spaces, declaring '*Mi a son veneto. E ti?*' ('I am Venetan. And you?').⁸⁷ The party networks of the Lega Veneta grew around this group, and indeed it was a member of this group, Achille Tramarin, who was added to the united autonomist list promoted by the Union Valdôtaine (Valdotanian Union) at the first European parliamentary elections in 1979, the year before the Lega Veneta was officially established.⁸⁸ The pattern was repeated

⁸⁶ Ottavio Lurati, 'La Lombardia', in *I dialetti italiani: Storia struttura uso*, ed. by Manlio Cortelazzo and others (Turin: UTET, 2002), pp. 226-260 (p. 226).

⁸⁷ Francesco Jori, *Dalla Lega alla Lega: Storia, movimenti, protagonisti* (Venice: Marsilio, 2009), p. 36.

⁸⁸ Ilvo Diamanti, *La Lega: Geografia, storia e sociologia di un nuovo soggetto politico* (Rome: Donzelli, 1993), p. 43.

elsewhere, as the *leghe* would often rely either on pre-existing dialect groups or on informal circles of friends to aid their formation.⁸⁹

Through a chance encounter, it was Bruno Salvadori, the leader of the Union Valdôtaine, who encouraged Bossi to take up autonomist politics. Following the advice of Salvadori, Bossi made language the first building block when setting up what would become the Lega Lombarda.

Nei primi mesi del mio rapporto con Bruno Salvadori, seguendo la linea da lui tracciata, che era poi quella classica di tutti i movimenti autonomisti fino allora, io mi ero accostato ad un gruppo di poeti e scrittori dialettali di Varese, convinto che bisognasse passare attraverso la riconquista della propria identità linguistica, prima di ottenere l'autonomia.⁹⁰

In the first months of my relationship with Bruno Salvadori, following the line he had traced, which was after all the classic one of all autonomist movements until then, I had approached a group of dialect poets and writers in Varese, convinced that it was necessary to go through the reconquest of our own linguistic identity before obtaining autonomy.

This group was most likely the local history and folklore society the Famiglia Bosina (*bosino* is a nickname for inhabitants of Varese derived from the name of St Ambrose, the patron saint of Lombardy). Bossi even met his second wife at a meeting the group organised on dialects.⁹¹

During this period, Bossi became an ardent defender of the status of dialects and composed his own dialect poetry. One dialect poem, written in 1979 and republished in *Lombardia autonomista* in 1988 under the pen name Duin da Vares, but apparently written by

⁸⁹ Tambini, p. 41.

⁹⁰ Umberto Bossi, 'Trionfa la Lega Lombarda' [speech to the First National Conference of the Lega Lombarda, 8-10 December 1989], *Lombardia autonomista*, 10 February 1990, pp. 1, 6-10 (p. 6).

⁹¹ Bossi and Vimercati, p. 53.

Bossi,⁹² is entitled 'Canzun pa ra Malpensa' (Song for Malpensa). The content of the poem, its title and period in which it was written suggest that it was a protest against plans for the expansion of Malpensa Airport, which is in Bossi's native Province of Varese and is now the busiest of the three airports serving Milan:

Sacar
 hinn i busch.
 E i praa.
 E ra nosta aqua.
 E ur vent.
 E ra fioca.
 Sacar
 hinn i radis.
 E ra nosta lengua.
 [...]
 E mò tacan cur ciar
 A s'cepà ur busc [sic]
 Dra Malpensa.
 [...]
 Van via i camius
 Me scurbatt,
 cun ra nosta storia.
 [...]⁹³

Sacred
 are the woods.
 And the meadows.
 And our water.
 And the wind.
 And the snow.
 Sacred
 are the roots.
 And our language.
 [...]
 And now they will be starting at dawn
 To tear down the woods
 Of Malpensa.
 [...]
 The lorries leave

⁹² Adalberto Signore and Alessandro Trocino, *Razza padana* (Milan: Rizzoli, 2008), p. 29.

⁹³ [Umberto Bossi] = Duin da Vares, 'Canzun pa ra Malpensa', *Lombardia autonomista*, 6.42-46 (December 1988), p. 4.

Like carrion crows,
taking our history with them.
[...]

In stark contrast, the Lega is now a staunch supporter of Malpensa Airport and tried to defend it from job cuts in the wake of Alitalia's bankruptcy.⁹⁴

In 1982, at a conference on minority languages held by the Circolo Filologico Milanese and at a meeting with Swiss Italian dialect poets held in Varese, Bossi made appeals against the subaltern connotations of dialect, touching on the use of dialect to deal with contemporary issues, as in the case of Bossi's poem about Malpensa.

In particolare sostenevo che l'uso del dialetto era considerato dall'uomo colto, ingiustamente, un'operazione regressiva. [...] Difendevo i 'dialettali' dall'accusa di avere nostalgia dell'era contadina [...]. Contestavo che il dialetto potesse avere soltanto una funzione retorico [sic] ornamentale, perchè [sic] il dialetto non necessariamente viene utilizzato solo per cantare il mondo del passato, bensì può essere lingua d'indagine della complessità del presente. [...] Ma soprattutto sostenevo che il vero motivo dell'ostilità del sistema al dialetto dipendeva dal fatto che esso era lingua di un popolo e quindi sottolineava implicitamente la contraddizione esistente tra forma centralista dello stato italiano e presenza di più popoli al suo interno.⁹⁵

In particular, I maintained that the use of dialect was considered by educated people, unjustly, to be a regressive action. [...] I defended the 'dialectals' against the accusation of being nostalgic for the peasant era [...]. I contested that dialect could only have an ornamental rhetorical function, because dialect is not necessarily only used to sing of the world of the past, but rather it can be a language used to probe the complexity of the present. [...] But above all, I maintained that the real reason for the hostility of the system towards dialect hinged on the fact that it was the language of a people and, therefore, it underlined implicitly the contradiction that exists between the centralist form of the Italian state and the presence of several populations within it.

⁹⁴ Rita Querezé, 'Bossi: Difenderemo Malpensa. Il Pd: Troppo tardi', *Corriere della Sera*, 6 January 2009, p. 3.

⁹⁵ Bossi, 'Trionfa la Lega Lombarda', p. 6.

Regarding Bossi's comments on Italian centralism, the Lega's federalist agenda was, as mentioned above, motivated by the party's perception of northern Italy as a victim of centralised politics and economic redistribution to southern Italy. It believed this was made worse by the influx to the North first of southerners, and later of immigrants from other countries. For ideological inspiration, the Lega has frequently turned to the Milanese federalist Carlo Cattaneo.⁹⁶ Some have spoken out against this, including the journalist and historian Indro Montanelli, who wrote that he was '*sicuro che, se sentisse parlare Bossi, Cattaneo imbraccerebbe il fucile*' ('sure that if he heard Bossi speak, Cattaneo would take up arms').⁹⁷

4.4.3 Dialects from the first speeches to temporary abandonment

Extensive reference will be made in this chapter to the Lega's first newspaper, *Lombardia Autonomista*, which ran from 1982 to 1992, having since been replaced by *Repubblica del Nord* (1992-1993), *Lega Nord* (1993-1996) and *La Padania* (1996-). In an early issue, it was stated that an agreement had been reached between Bossi and the Circolo Filologico Lombardo (Lombard Philological Circle) to publish a series of articles to present '*poeti e scrittori dei vari patuà di lingua lombarda*' ('poets and writers of the various patois of the Lombard language'), the first of which was Nino Cimasoni, from Varese.⁹⁸ It does not appear, however, that this series continued. It was also announced that the newspaper would open a debate on the language question, and there was criticism of the lack of broadcasting in Lombard since the third state television channel Rai 3, which opened in 1979, had been intended to offer some

⁹⁶ Fabio Airaghi, '130 anni dopo: La proposta politica di Carlo Cattaneo', *Lombardia Autonomista*, 7.40 (December 1989), p. 1.

⁹⁷ Indro Montanelli, 'Carlo Cattaneo imbraccerebbe il fucile contro Bossi', *Corriere della Sera*, 19 June 1997, p. 41.

⁹⁸ *Lombardia Autonomista*, 'La questione della lingua / Nino Cimasoni', 15-16 (December 1983), pp. 2-3.

regional programming.⁹⁹ Bossi later revealed that the impact of his links with dialect writers was not helpful for his project, as their writings were evidently not insurrectionist enough, focusing primarily on '*un sentimento di rimpianto del passato*' ('a feeling of regret for the past'), and it was this that led him to write his own poetry.¹⁰⁰

On 10 August 1983, Achille Tramarin of the Liga Veneta made his first speech in the Chamber of Deputies in Venetan, followed on 12 August by Graziano Girardi in the Senate. Both were interrupted by the respective speakers of each chamber, who invited them to speak in Italian.¹⁰¹ In 1985, Roberto Gremmo made his first speech in Piedmontese at the provincial assembly of Turin, and was interrupted only by a councillor of the post-fascist Movimento Sociale Italiano (Italian Social Movement – MSI), with representatives of other parties supporting his choice to speak in dialect.¹⁰² Following consultation with the provincial assembly in Cagliari, where Sardinian had occasionally been used, the Piedmontese provincial councillors decided that discussions on council decisions or laws would have to be made in Italian, but that Piedmontese could be used in other speeches if an exact written copy of the speech was handed in, with an Italian translation, in advance.¹⁰³

The turn of the Lega Lombarda came after the local elections of 1985, when Giuseppe Leoni and Pierangelo Brivio made their first speeches in dialect in the municipal councils of Varese and Gallarate respectively. Leoni's speech was reproduced four times in full in *Lombardia Autonomista*, but only the first time was it printed in both dialect and Italian. On the other occasions it appeared only in Italian. In his speech, as well as calling on the city

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 2.

¹⁰⁰ Bossi, 'Trionfa la Lega Lombarda', p. 6.

¹⁰¹ Jori, *Dalla Liga alla Lega*, p. 54.

¹⁰² *Lombardia Autonomista*, 'Avanti con la democrazia: Ammesso l'uso della lingua piemontese negli interventi al Consiglio Provinciale di Torino', 31 (August 1985), p. 1.

¹⁰³ *Lombardia Autonomista*, 'Consiglio Provinciale di Torino: Verbale riunione capigruppo', 31 (August 1985), p. 2.

council to sponsor experimental language courses in Lombard (see 4.4.6 below), Leoni passed comment on the reactions of other councillors to hearing dialect.

[La] lingua lumbarda [...] par dagh inscì fastidi propri a chi consiglier che duarian invece regurdass ca l'è la stessa lingua da chi che cunt ul so sacrificzi ja fann pudè vess chì inceou.¹⁰⁴

[The] Lombard language [...] seems to be such an annoyance precisely to those councillors, who should instead remember that it's the same language of those who, through their sacrifices, have made it possible for them to be here today.

It is unclear whether the speech as reproduced in the newspaper was the version that Leoni had written beforehand and distributed to all the councillors, in which case he had shown some foresight, or whether these remarks were added while he was speaking. According to Bossi's editorial comment, more than half of the other councillors left the meeting while Leoni was talking: the first to get up was said to be Agrifoglio, of Democrazia Cristiana (Christian Democrats – DC), followed by councillors from the Partito Socialista Democratico Italiano (Italian Democratic Socialist Party) and the PRI, and the entire group of PCI councillors. Meanwhile, in Gallarate, Pierangelo Brivio is said to have '*tenuto in scacco*' ('kept in check') the entire council for two hours, eventually managing to give his speech in dialect.¹⁰⁵ Although they did not make another speech entirely in dialect for some time, dialect did reportedly become more commonly heard at council meetings after this, even from councillors representing other parties.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Giuseppe Leoni, 'L'intervento di Varese', *Lombardia Autonomista*, 33 (October 1985), pp. 1-4 (p. 4).

¹⁰⁵ [Umberto Bossi], 'La Lega spicca il volo: Il primo storico intervento in lombardo è toccato a Leoni', *Lombardia Autonomista*, 33 (October 1985), p. 1.

¹⁰⁶ Umberto Bossi, 'La lingua lombarda', *Lombardia Autonomista*, 4.16 (September 1986), p. 1.

Although a relatively large number of articles in *Lombardia Autonomista* use dialects in their titles or a few words in the main body, the vast majority of articles appear in Italian. For example, in an interview with the Lega Lombarda's first local councillor in Varese, Giuseppe Leoni, which is otherwise reproduced completely in Italian, the first couple of lines are transcribed in dialect:

'Inlura ma l'è staja, Giusepp? 'Sti cà pupular gh'hai demm o no ai napulitan?'

'Se 'gni chì par toeum in gir o cus'è?'¹⁰⁷

'So has it happened, Giuseppe? Are we going to give these council houses to the Neapolitans or not?'

'Have you come to pull my leg or something?'

The use of dialectal 'banner words' has, however, been significant in the portrayal of the Lega even in the mainstream media, and it has hence played a key role in publicising the party. Bossi's nickname *il senatùr* is surely one of the most prominent examples, as is *lumbard* (Lombard), used to describe a member or sympathiser of the Lega Nord in Lombardy. Apart from directly political vocabulary, also more general words that are widely known in the rest of Italy as being northern in origin are used in the Lega exponents' otherwise mainly Italian discourse, such as *carega* or *cadrega* (chair).¹⁰⁸ Other banner words could also include the names of the parties themselves. The use of the dialectal name *Liga Veneta* was visibly not Italian. It was, and still is, often spelt 'Liga Veneta' even in Lega publications, presumably due to the occasional lack of the correct character on contemporary word processing systems. The name of the Lega Lombarda can be spelt the same way in Italian

¹⁰⁷ Giacomo Bianchi, 'Basta case popolari: Una scusa buona per attaccare la Lega', *Lombardia Autonomista*, 30 (May 1985), p. 2.

¹⁰⁸ Riccardo Gualdo, '"Patria", "stato", "nazione" e "regione" nel linguaggio politico dell'ultimo decennio', *Lingua italiana d'oggi*, 3 (2006), 103-124 (p. 121).

and dialect, although the alternative dialect spelling 'Lega Lumbarda' was used prominently in *Lombardia Autonomista* between April and late September 1986 (see figure 4.3 below).

For the 1984 European elections, the various northern autonomist parties joined forces to form the Union Europea Federalista (European Federalist Union), using the dialect word *union*, but in *Lombardia Autonomista* this was first recorded in Italian as the 'Unione Europea Federalista'.¹⁰⁹ The next issue corrected this but, for example, named their Piedmontese allies as both the 'Movimento Rinascita Piemonese' (Piedmontese Renaissance Movement, in Italian) and 'Moviment d'Arnassita Piemontéisa' (in Piedmontese) on the same page.¹¹⁰ Perhaps the most important category of banner words consists of place-names (see 4.4.5 below).

Categories of Lega membership have also been given dialect names over the years. In late 1985, a payment of 20,000 lire would entitle a supporter to the status of '*amis*' ('friend'), which had previously had the Italian denomination '*amico*'.¹¹¹ In 1986, other categories added included '*lumbard*' and '*riaa*' ('torrents'), for young members (see figure 4.3 below).

¹⁰⁹ *Lombardia Autonomista*, 'Alle elezioni europee l'alleanza dei popoli padano-alpini', 17 (January 1984), p. 1.

¹¹⁰ *Lombardia Autonomista*, 'Union per l'Europa Federalista', 18 (March 1984), p. 1.

¹¹¹ *Lombardia Autonomista*, 33 (October 1985), p. 4.



LOMBARDIA AUTONOMISTA

ann IV - n. 6 **LA VUS DEL POPUL LUMBARD**

Lumbard, muvemas tücc, e drelaman, perché Roma l'autonomia ghe la regala minga de sücür. O semm bun de cunquistala nun, o 'l noster popul el scumpariss de la storia

APRIL 1986 - Settimanale della LEGA LUMBARDA - Redazione: Ca- sella Post. 1625 - 20123 Milano - Tel. (0332) 24.27.29 - Dir. Resp.: U. Bossi	Reg. Sampa Tribunale di Varese n. 422 del 19-5-1983 EDITRICE LOMBARDA - Varese - C.C.I.A.A. n. 180311 Composizione e stampa: « Edigraf » - Ternate (Varese) Sped. in abb. post. Gr. I bis/70% - Aut. Dir. Post. Varese	Copia gratuita - Sovvenzione annuale L. 10.000 intestata a Lombardia Auto- nomista - Cas. Post. 1625 - 20123 Mi- lano - Conto Corr. Postale 13076211
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29 de MASG **FESTA NAZIONAL del POPUL LUMBARD**

**Domenica 25 maggio - Tücc a Legnan, perché la Sagra la sia pü 'na manifestaziun
fulcluristica, ma 'l segn de la vultà de rinascita del Popul Lumbard**

TESSERAMENT 1986

TESSERA DE SOCI	L. 100.000
TESSER DE SUVVENZIUN	
TESSERA DE LUMBARD	L. 50.000
TESSERA DE AMIS	L. 20.000
TESSERA DE RIAA (riservata ai giovani fino a 25 anni)	L. 10.000

**LEGA LUMBARDA
PER LA LIBERTA' E LA DIGNITA'
DEL POPOLO LOMBARDO**

Figure 4.3 In April 1986, *Lombardia Autonomista* featured more dialect than most other issues up to that point. This was the first issue to use an almost entirely dialectal front page masthead, including a new name for the party. 'Anno' ('year') has become 'ann', and 'la voce del popolo lombardo' ('The voice of the Lombard people') has also been dialectised. The new quotation that appears in the centre can be translated as 'Lombards, let us all move forward together, because Rome will certainly not give autonomy away easily. Either we must be ready to conquer it by ourselves, or our people will disappear from history'. The month also appears in dialect as 'april' instead of 'aprile'. The spelling of some of these dialect words is changed later in the year, and 'Milano' in the editorial address was also later dialectised as 'Milan', but the spelling of 'lumbarda' in the party name would revert to 'lombarda' in September 1986. A comprehensive dialectal list of names of all the provincial sections would first appear in *Lombardia Autonomista* in August 1986. In the centre are invitations to both the 'National Festival of the Lombard People' on 29 May and the annual traditional festival of Legnano. At the bottom is the list of membership categories, with an eclectic mix of dialect and standard Italian.

In 1984, Roberto Ronchi began writing short columns for *Lombardia Autonomista* with lists of Lombard words. The first list of general words of cultural interest was apparently taken from the first section of a dialect dictionary, with five words beginning with 'b' and fourteen words beginning with 'c'.¹¹² The second list made a thematic choice, dealing with '*i malqualità de l'omm e i so contrari*' ('the bad qualities of mankind and their opposites').¹¹³ These seem to be representative of the Lega's stereotypical portrayal of southern and northern values respectively. The list of opposites is reproduced below with approximate English translations.

Balöss = Furfante [= Scoundrel]	Onèst = Onesto [= Honest]
Barlafús = Ciarpame, carabattole, confusionario, disordinato [= Rubbish, bits and pieces, bungling, messy]	Cavèzz, precís = Preciso, ordinato, curato, diligente [= Accurate, neat, tidy, diligent]
Fint, fintón = Impostore, subdolo, falso [= Imposter, sneak, false]	S'cètt, sincér = Sincero [= Sincere]
Gnùcch = Ottuso, ostinato [= Obtuse, obstinate]	Aspèrt, gùzz = Perspicace, acuto [= Perceptive, sharp]
Lifròcch, luzón = Lazzarone, scioperato [= Shirker, idler]	Lauradür, sgobón = Lavoratore, sgobbone [= Worker, slogger]
Malmostós = Scontroso [= Grumpy]	Cerós = Socievole, affabile [= Sociable, affable]
Màrtur, marturòtt, marturàsc = Ingenuo [= Ingenuous]	Scròcch = Furbo, scaltro [= Shrewd, clever]
Stemègna, tegnón, spiöss = Avaro [= Miserly]	De bón coeur = Generoso [= Generous]

¹¹² Roberto Ronchi, 'El Lombard', *Lombardia Autonomista*, 20 (September 1984), p. 2.

¹¹³ Roberto Ronchi, 'El Lombard', *Lombardia Autonomista*, 21 (October 1984), p. 2.

In 1986, perhaps weary of the movement's difficulties engaging existing associations beyond a certain point (see 4.4.6 below), *Lombardia Autonomista* publicised a new organisation with the dialect name Lumbardità (Lombardness). This organisation was described as apolitical, but its address was at the same post office box as the newspaper itself. Explaining its creation as a reaction to the '*incalzare dell'egemonia meridionale*' ('pressure of southern hegemony') and claiming to be based on a similar project in Occitania, it seems to have been a primarily social club.

Lumbardità [...] sorge allo scopo di potenziare, diffondere e salvaguardare tutto ciò che è lombardo. [...] 'Lumbardità' inizia la sua attività con la 'Sezione Incontri' che mira a ricollegare i canali interrotti dalle immigrazioni favorendo conoscenze, amicizie e, perché no, matrimoni tra lombardi.¹¹⁴

Lumbardità [...] has sprung up with the purpose of strengthening, spreading and safeguarding everything that is Lombard. [...] 'Lumbardità' starts its activity with the 'Encounters Section' that aims to reconnect the channels broken by immigration, facilitating new acquaintances, friendships and, why not, marriages between Lombards.

The occasional ethnic dimension of the use of dialect is clear in its use in the context of the name of this association.

Although the evidence so far has shown that the Lega's written use of dialect in its newspaper is relatively inconsistent, the notion of the party as a defender of dialect seems to have been established in voters' minds at an early stage. This is demonstrated quite clearly in one letter, written entirely in dialect, from a supporter of the Lega:

¹¹⁴ *Lombardia Autonomista*, 'Lumbardità: Associazione Nazionale Lombarda', 4.3 (February 1986), p. 4.

Con questa letera ve mandi ün asegn de vint mila franc per rinuua
la mia tesera de amis, nela speranza de pudè parlà in meneghin
anca duman... senza ciapai!!

Ve saüdi e sperì de pudé vütav un pu quest'ann che vegn!¹¹⁵

With this letter I'm sending a cheque for twenty thousand francs
[sic] to renew my membership card as a friend [one of the
categories of membership], in the hope of being able to speak in
Milanese also in the future... without being beaten up!!

Best wishes and I hope to be able to vote for you a little in the
coming year!

The use of the word '*franc*' ('francs') instead of '*lire*' is interesting. Lire were occasionally known as 'francs' in dialect and, perhaps since the lira was, after all, the currency of the Italian state, some versions of the Padanian currency that the Lega would later produce would be called '*franc*', while others have been '*leghe*' ('leagues' or 'knots') or '*lire*'. The two different spellings in the above letter of '*pudè*' / '*pudé*' ('to be able') reflect the widespread uncertainty regarding spelling in dialect, which is to be expected as Lombard dialect is not generally taught in schools and has no single standard grammar.

Although it is difficult to say that there is a clear, unified linguistic identity in Lombardy, dialects were evidently of particular importance to the Lega Lombarda in the construction of the national-regional identity of Lombardy and, later, of Padania. Even among Lega members and supporters, though, only just over half (in 1991) spoke dialect regularly.¹¹⁶ Bossi believed, however, that the Lombard dialects, as a group, could be constructed as a Lombard koinè, which he saw as a language in its own right.¹¹⁷ Franco Rocchetta, of the Liga Veneta, has said that when he first met Bossi, the Lombard leader had

¹¹⁵ Laura Tumaini, letter to *Lombardia Autonomista*, 4.7 (May 1986), p. 2.

¹¹⁶ Roberto Biorcio, 'La Lega come attore politico', pp. 67-68.

¹¹⁷ Bossi, 'Trionfa la Lega Lombarda', p. 6.

with him various computer printouts in which he was trying to identify a unified Lombard language based on the various sub-regional dialects.¹¹⁸ Dialect speakers, however, most frequently define the boundaries of their dialects on a very local level. Most dialect speakers of the Province of Varese, for example, are unlikely to say they speak the *lingua lombarda* (Lombard language) or *dialetto lombardo* (Lombard dialect); they are more likely to say they speak, for instance, *dialetto bustocco* (the dialect of the town of Busto Arsizio), *dialetto luinese* (the dialect of Luino and the surrounding area) or *dialetto varesino* (the dialect of Varese, town and province). They may alternatively use the nickname of Varese's dialect, *bosino*, or they may even say that they speak *dialetto milanese*. All these dialects are part of the Western Lombard dialect group, but their speakers can easily detect differences between the dialect of one village and another. This truly local level of micro-identity is largely absent from the Lega's discourse, which tends to focus instead on what the party sees as the unifying regional or macro-/multi-regional level.¹¹⁹

The linguist Mioni has discussed the linguistic validity of the borders of Padania, and the other two macroregions Etruria (in central Italy) and the 'Repubblica del Sud' ('Republic of the South'), as proposed by Gianfranco Miglio and Francesco Frattolin at the time of Miglio's move away from the Lega, when the Lega's own short-term federalist proposals were again in flux. He concludes that the borders between Padania and Etruria do reflect dialectal boundaries fairly well, but there is some confusion between Etruria and the Republic of the South due to the inclusion of Abruzzo and Molise in Etruria.¹²⁰ Leghists

¹¹⁸ Interviewed in Francesco Jori, 'In Italia c'è un regime', *Il Gazzettino*, 15 March 1993, cited in Diamanti, p. 56.

¹¹⁹ Renato Mannheimer, 'Chi vota Lega e perché?', in *La Lega Lombarda*, ed. by Renato Mannheimer (Milan: Feltrinelli), pp. 122-158 (p. 141).

¹²⁰ Alberto M. Mioni, 'Confini dialettali e nuove proposte di assetto territoriale in Italia', *Lingua e stile*, 30 (1995), 243-252 (pp. 247-248).

frequently refer to the work of Australian linguist Geoffrey Hull to legitimise their claims regarding Padanian linguistic unity.¹²¹

Among all the various *leghe*, some members of the Lega Lombarda were particularly sceptical of the attempt to make dialects a central part of their identity, as many believed it was not relevant for a multi-dialectal region like Lombardy. One local leader said that the cultivation of dialects would only have been productive in a few mountain valleys, not in the Padanian plain, where the majority of the population lives.¹²²

The linguistic culture of Veneto is more developed than that of Lombardy, and dialects have more prestige there. Fabrizio Comencini, once the leader of the Liga Veneta, explained the reasons why many see Venetan as a language:

Noi rivendichiamo il fatto che il veneto non è un dialetto ma una lingua. Abbiamo fatto una proposta di legge per la normalizzazione della grafia regionale. La Repubblica Veneta è durata circa 1000 anni, il veneto è stato usato sia in diplomazia, sia nell'economia, sia in giurisprudenza, sia in varie occasioni... Se noi vediamo, del resto, il veneto è usato a tutti i livelli, è interclassista, non è la lingua del popolano, è la lingua di tutti, i professori universitari parlano il veneto. Infatti gli amici di Bologna mi dicevano 'Questi sono professori universitari, o cosa sono?'. [...] E il veneto non possiamo dire che è un dialetto del toscano perché il toscano è venuto dopo del veneto. Da noi si parla comunemente sia il veneto che l'italiano.¹²³

We claim it to be a fact that Venetan is not a dialect but a language. We have proposed a law to normalise the regional spelling. The Venetian Republic lasted c. 1,000 years – Venetan has been used in diplomacy, in economics, in jurisprudence, and in other circumstances... If we have a look, after all, Venetan is used at all levels. It's inter-classist, it isn't the language of the lower class

¹²¹ Geoffrey Hull, 'The Linguistic Unity of Northern Italy and Rhaetia' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Sydney, 1982).

¹²² Giancarlo Rovati, 'Le Leghe del Nord tra movimento e partito', in *La protesta dei forti: Leghe del Nord e Partito Sardo d'Azione*, ed. by Antonietta Mazzette and Giancarlo Rovati (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 1993), pp. 15-74 (pp. 54-55).

¹²³ Cited in Roberto Biorcio, *La Padania promessa* (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 1997), p. 116.

[*popolano*], it's the language of everyone. University professors speak Venetan. In fact, my friends from Bologna said to me: 'Are these really university professors?' [...] And we can't say that Venetan is a dialect of Tuscan, because Tuscan came after Venetan. Where we live, normally people speak both Venetan and Italian.

In the early 1990s, when the Lega was making its transition towards being a major player on the political scene, the party distanced itself temporarily from the dialect cause. In December 1989, at the first '*congresso nazionale*' ('national conference') of the Lega Lombarda, Bossi claimed that the idea of using dialects to create a Lombard autonomist movement was, for him, '*entrata in crisi*' ('in crisis').¹²⁴ He ascribed this to two main observations he had made, firstly that dialects were also respected by the PCI, which organised conferences on dialects as a form of language that was '*anti borghese e anti fascista*' ('anti-bourgeois and anti-fascist'), and secondly that dialect was frequently used in the service of folklore, which Bossi believed '*non generava paura nel sistema*' ('did not generate fear within the system').¹²⁵ This speech was, however, also intended to move the Lega Lombarda away from the concentration on Lombard nationalism and towards Padanian federalism, so Bossi's comments may have been aimed at redirecting the attention of his supporters away from '*l'isolamento*' ('isolation') to strengthen '*la lotta contro il centralismo dello stato*' ('the fight against state centralism').¹²⁶ Bossi did not believe the Lega should exist only to defend dialects.¹²⁷ Bossi did also recognise that, in contrast to certain other regions in northern Italy, Lombardy did not have any linguistic 'homeland' in bordering countries which might otherwise have supported his call for autonomy.

¹²⁴ Bossi, 'Trionfa la Lega Lombarda', p. 6.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Tambini, p. 21.

The Lega's interest in dialects had not, however, been waning prior to this. In the same month, an issue of *Lombardia Autonomista* had on its front cover the slogan '*Scuola coloniale basta!*' ('That's enough colonial schooling!') and the front page main headline '*Senza dialetto non più radici*' ('Without dialect no more roots').¹²⁸ This issue was distributed at the conference.¹²⁹ In spite of Bossi's comments, conference delegates voted unanimously to declare a song in dialect as the Lombard national anthem: *Lombardia* by Marco Candiani, with music by Roberto Motta.¹³⁰ For some time after this, dialects would have a lower profile in Lega policy, but historical and folkloric references would continue to appear in the Lega's discourse.¹³¹ In *Lombardia Autonomista*, for example, in addition to some items about folklore or local festivals, dialects were allocated space in letters, poems and cartoons, but there were fewer in-depth articles about dialects. The following sections will discuss some of the major arenas in which dialects maintained a high profile, namely in posters and cartoons and in the place-name campaign, before turning back to the campaign for dialects in education.

4.4.4 Printed propaganda: Posters and cartoons

To begin with, the Lega's messages were largely ignored by the mainstream media, but the party's activists managed to spread their campaign with posters, leaflets and graffiti, gradually building consensus. Their message was successful as it dealt with concrete problems, but it was also consistent with the attitudes of 'common sense', again in the

¹²⁸ Fabio Binelli, 'Senza dialetto non più radici: L'importanza del nostro linguaggio', *Lombardia Autonomista*, 7.38 (December 1989), p. 1.

¹²⁹ Luciano Costantini, *Dentro la Lega: Come nasce, come cresce, come comunica* (Rome: Koinè, 1994), p. 48.

¹³⁰ *Lombardia Autonomista*, 'Inno Nazionale Lombardo', 10 February 1990, p. 2.

¹³¹ Tambini, p. 54.

Gramscian sense (see 2.4 above), of peripheral areas of Lombardy.¹³² In spite of developments in modern communications, the extensive use of posters in Italian political propaganda seems destined to continue, and is closely tied to the eternal vitality of Italian street life.¹³³

The importance to the Lega of the visibility of their party symbols in public spaces, especially in the form of posters, was stressed by Marco Reguzzoni, who is now the leader of the Lega Nord group in the Chamber of Deputies, having previously been provincial president of Varese. Having outlined the development of the Varese section of the Lega, Reguzzoni concluded by saying: 'and of course, we have all the walls of Varese covered with our posters',¹³⁴ as if this were the crowning achievement of his section. Leaflets were also seen as vital, and Luca Zaia, now the regional president of Veneto and a former agriculture minister, has said that the arrival of fast photocopiers seemed to the Leghists like a dream come true.¹³⁵

The strong emotive power of the Lega's printed propaganda was demonstrated when, in 1986, a magistrate in Saronno requested the seizure of all Lega posters '*ovunque si trovino*' ('wherever they are'), even in the past, present and future. This decision was overturned on appeal.¹³⁶ The style of many of the Lega's posters is best described as a printed version of graffiti.¹³⁷ Most of the posters, especially the earliest ones but also many more recent, use simple text and basic, often hand-drawn graphics, with everyday language and slogans that

¹³² Roberto Biorcio, 'La società civile e la politica', p. 1052.

¹³³ Luciano Cheles, 'Picture Battles in the Piazza: The Political Poster', in *The Art of Persuasion: Political Communication in Italy from 1945 to the 1990s*, ed. by Luciano Cheles and Lucio Sponza (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), pp. 124-179 (p. 171).

¹³⁴ Cited in Gómez-Reino Cachafeiro, p. 149.

¹³⁵ Luca Zaia, cited in Bendicenti, p. 928.

¹³⁶ Umberto Bossi, '"Scuola coloniale basta!" Spaventa i partiti romani l'appello di Lega Lombarda, Liga Veneta e Piemont', *Lombardia Autonomista*, 4.19 (December 1986), p. 1.

¹³⁷ Cheles, p. 161.

are in opposition to the more formal language of other parties at that time. A large number have also featured dialects, as will be seen in some of the examples presented below.

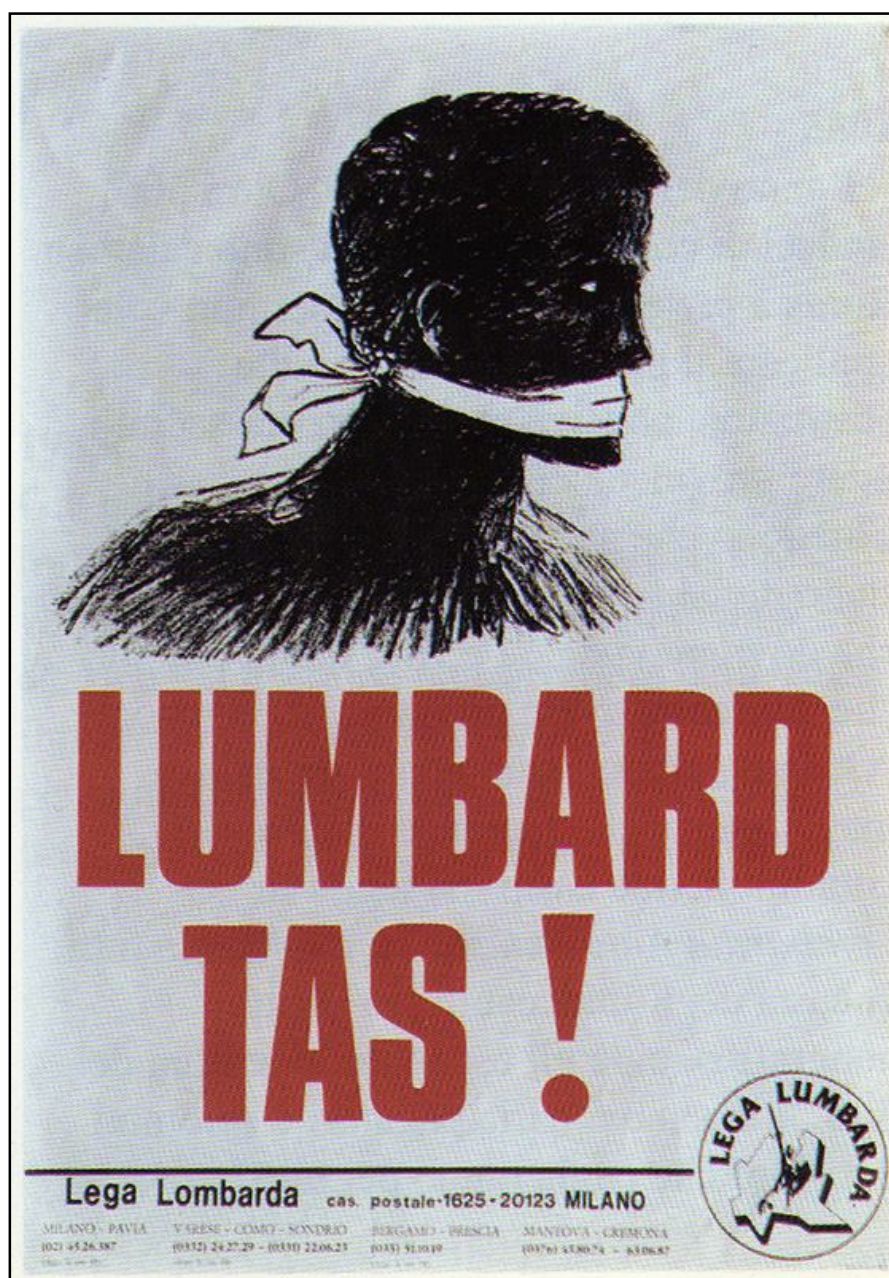


Figure 4.4 Lega Lombarda poster, 1985. The main text, in dialect, reads 'Lombard, be silent!', while the image, drawn by Bossi himself, is reminiscent of the four blindfolded Moors' heads that appear on the Sardinian flag (since 1999, the blindfolds have been officially raised above the eyes), or the single Moor wearing a bandana (also previously a blindfold) on the Corsican flag. Note the name of the party spelt '*Lega Lombarda*' in the party's address with the Italian place-name '*Milano*' but '*Lega Lumbarda*', more obviously in dialect, on the symbol. Reprinted in [Lega Nord], *La Lega Nord attraverso i manifesti* (Milan: Editoriale Nord, 1996), p. 9.

el Veneto vostro el xe anca nostro

Una volta, nel 1947, il Veneto fu diviso in due parti: una che restò in Italia e una che passò alla Jugoslavia. Ma il Veneto non fu diviso: è una lingua che vive in ogni parte del Veneto, e che è anche nostra. E' una lingua che non viene insegnata a scuola, e che non viene insegnata ai propri figli. Ma è una lingua che non viene insegnata a scuola, e che non viene insegnata ai propri figli. Ma è una lingua che non viene insegnata a scuola, e che non viene insegnata ai propri figli.

**Parlè
Veneto
anca
co i fhioi**

Il Veneto della lingua Veneta è un territorio che si estende da Montebelluna a Bassano del Grappa, da Treviso a Udine, da Belluno a Trieste. È un territorio che si estende da Montebelluna a Bassano del Grappa, da Treviso a Udine, da Belluno a Trieste. È un territorio che si estende da Montebelluna a Bassano del Grappa, da Treviso a Udine, da Belluno a Trieste.

un popolo alienato non ha più lingua

«Alienato è chi accetta senza rabbia che sulla propria terra, i propri figli usino esclusivamente una lingua che, alla loro età, lui non usava» (da un libro di Carlo, la Nuova Filologia Veneta, Paolo S. Stin de Liv, Silvio Acquarone)

CENTRO DI CULTURA VENETA

c/c n. 26550 Banco S. Marco, Fil. S. Stin de Liv. il Presidente Avv. ALBERTO BOSCOLO

S. STIN DE LIV. - Tel. (0421) 69 4 02 - (045) 52 79 86

Figure 4.5 Poster for the Centro di Cultura Veneta (Centre for Venetan Culture), apparently connected with the Liga Veneta, 1985. The Venetan text at the top reads 'Your Venetan is also ours' or, alternatively, 'Your Veneto is ours too'. The main text, again in Venetan, reads 'Speak Venetan with your children too'. Above the name of the association is a slogan in Italian, 'an alienated people no longer has a language'. The place-name in the Centre's address, as well as in the address of its bank, is also given in dialect, 'S. Stin de Liv.' instead of the Italian 'S[anto]. Stino di Livenza'. Reprinted in [Lega Nord], *La Lega Nord attraverso i manifesti*, p. 10.



Figure 4.6 A Lega Lombarda poster featuring Lombard dialect, produced in connection with the 1988 local elections. The Italian text in the top-right reads 'The Lombard hen "serves up" golden eggs for Rome and further down! They all end up fried in a pan and they won't come back to us again!' The large dialect text towards the bottom-left reads 'The *tricolore* that we don't want!', and all the place-names at the bottom of the poster are in dialect, including 'Milan' in the main address bar. Reprinted in [Lega Nord], *La Lega Nord attraverso i manifesti*, p. 19.

The northern hen laying golden eggs promptly collected by a portly woman in traditional 'Roman' attire (see figure 4.6 above and 4.7 below) has become one of the Lega's most popular motifs, and the image has been copied on posters by other parties, including the centrist Italia dei Valori (Italy of Values – IdV) in 2008.¹³⁸ A version of this poster in the dialect of Pavia ('*Al triculur ca vuruma no!*') landed Franco Castellazzi, the provincial secretary of the Lega Lombarda, with accusations of '*vilipendio al tricolore*' ('contempt of the *tricolore*'). In court, the judges ruled that there was no foundation to the accusation, even mentioning that it could be understood as an act of respect towards the flag and towards Italy for believing them to be '*immuni da ombre che ne offuschino il significato ideale*' ('immune to shadows that could blur their ideal meaning').¹³⁹

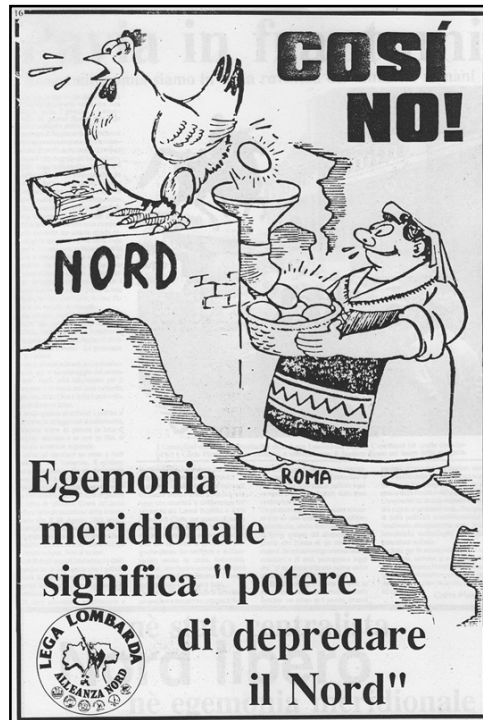


Figure 4.7 European election poster, printed in *Lombardia Autonomista*, 29 May 1989, p. 16. The main text, all in standard Italian, reads 'This is not how it should be! Southern hegemony means "the power to pillage the North"'.

¹³⁸ *Corriere della Sera*, 'E la gallina leghista razzola sui manifesti Idv', 16 July 2008, p. 11.

¹³⁹ *La Provincia Pavese*, '"Il manifesto della Lega chiede un'Italia più giusta": I giudici spiegano l'assoluzione di Castellazzi'; repr. in *Lombardia Autonomista*, 15 July 1989, p. 5.



**NESSUNA
DISCARICA
A BODIO**

**La DC e il PSI vogliono trasfor-
mare l'ex cava di Bodio in una
discarica industriale speciale.**

Per questi partiti è più che giusto che chi ha già fatto miliardi rovinando l'ambiente, adesso possa andare avanti a riempirsi le tasche, scaricando nella cava di Bodio scorie industriali ad alto inquinamento, che arrivano anche da molto lontano, in una zona che confina con le acque del lago di Vares e della palude Brabbia.

**Aj g'han ol cü
al post dol co!**

Tutti solidali con la gente di Bodio, Cazzago Brabbia, Inarzo, Casale Litta, che più direttamente rischia di subire le conseguenze delle scelte che vorrebbero operare gli "illuminati" che ci governano.

Figure 4.8 This text appeared in *Lombardia Autonomista*, 26 July 1989, p. 5. As the text at the top in capital letters claims, the Lega wants there to be 'No dump in Bodio', when there was talk of turning a quarry in Bodio Lomnago (Province of Varese) into an industrial refuse site. There is a large text in dialect in the lower half, referring to local politicians from the DC and PSI. The Lega claims, to translate somewhat freely, 'They don't know their arse from their elbow'. This is one of the very earliest printed examples of a direct vulgar insult from the Lega. It is interesting to note that the text in small print at the centre refers to Lake Varese as '*lago di Vares*', using the dialectal specific element instead of the Italian *Varese*, but the Italian generic and preposition *lago di*. The full name in dialect is *lagh de Vares*. This reflects the iconic status that the place-name *Vares* had achieved for the Lega movement, while *Bodio* – in dialect *Bös*¹⁴⁰ – is evidently not as iconic or well known.

¹⁴⁰ Teresa Cappello and Carlo Tagliavini, *Dizionario degli etnici e dei toponimi italiani* (Bologna: Pàtron, 1981), p. 56.



Figure 4.9 Non-northern dialects have also appeared on Lega posters, such as this one from May 1990. The Italian text at the top repeats the Leghist slogan 'The *tricolore* that we don't want!', while the main text exclaims, in the dialect of Rome, 'We are Parties [sic] of Rome! With taxes we're gobbling up the North'. Here the party symbol shows the Lega Lombarda as a 'national' section of the federal Lega Nord structure. Note that northern Italy is coloured green, a symbolic colour of Lombardy and the colour later chosen to represent Padania. Reprinted in [Lega Nord], *La Lega Nord attraverso i manifesti*, p. 32.

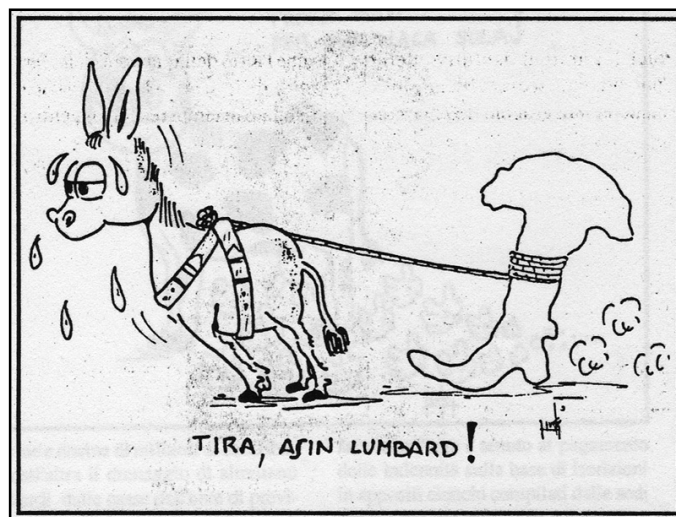


Figure 4.10 In the wake of Bossi's December 1989 speech, in which it was implied that the Lega would no longer focus so intently on the promotion of dialects, one new space where dialects would flourish was in satirical cartoons, such as this one from *Lombardia Autonomista*, 11 June 1990, p. 5. The caption reads 'Pull, Lombard donkey!', echoing another Lega slogan '*Paga e taci, somaro lombardo*' ('Shut up and pay, Lombard ass'). This was one of two cartoons with captions in dialect in the same issue.



Figure 4.11 This cartoon appeared in *Lombardia Autonomista*, 18 July 1990, p. 6. A gigantic incarnation of the legendary medieval hero Alberto da Giussano, carrying a Lega Lombarda shield with the crusaders' cross of St George behind, shakes the Pirelli Tower in Milan, seat of Lombardy's regional administration, exclaiming in dialect '... is it really necessary to have to do certain things to be able to get into my own home?'. Note the fleeing representatives and tumbling papers and pens of bureaucracy, as well as symbols of the traditional parties, including a Catholic biretta, a hammer and sickle, a PCI member wearing a scarf, an ivy leaf representing the PRI, and a member of the MSI with a fez clutching to his party symbol.

4.4.5 Place-names and the linguistic landscape

The Lega's symbolic use of dialectal place-names is highlighted in their party publications, although often with inconsistencies, as has already been shown (see figure 4.8 above). For example, when announcing the opening of new provincial editorial offices for *Lombardia Autonomista* in Mantua and Milan, these two names were given in the local dialects (which use the same forms as in English), and so is the name of one of the cities where a provincial editorial office already exists, Bergamo (*Berghem* in dialect). The name of Varese (*Vares* or *Varés* in dialect), Bossi's and the Lega's heartland and the location of the Lega's first office, is strangely given in Italian on that occasion.¹⁴¹ Today, the most frequent use of dialects in the newspaper *La Padania* is to name the cities and towns in the bylines of articles.

² **Nuove sedi**
 Preparete nel mese di agosto, entreranno in funzione verso metà settembre.

Berghem via Giorgio Paglia, 5 tel. 035/24.74.13	- La sede è aperta nelle ore d'ufficio - Il sabato pomeriggio riunioni per i giovani - Venite direttamente in sede a tesserarvi
Comm via P. Boldoni, 16 tel. 031/ 30.13.68	- La sede è aperta nelle ore d'ufficio - Il sabato pomeriggio riunioni per i giovani - Venite direttamente in sede a tesserarvi

Figure 4.12 *Lombardia Autonomista*, 6.15-19 (August 1988), p. 2. This headline and box announce the opening of two new Lega Lombarda offices in Bergamo and Como, with the names of these cities given in Lombard, even though the rest of the information and the article that follows are in standard Italian.

¹⁴¹ *Lombardia Autonomista*, 'Nuove redazioni provinciali', 4.2 (January 1986), p. 3.



Figure 4.13 The Lega often aim to show solidarity towards other peoples they see as oppressed, including others in the Italian Republic, especially in the North. This article announces a meeting held in Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtirol between the Lega Lombarda, the Liga Veneta, the Union Valtôtaine and the Südtirolischer Volkspartei (South Tyrolean People's Party). The German name of the town where this meeting took place is given much greater prominence than the Italian name. *Lombardia Autonomista*, 6.27-31 (November 1988), p. 6.

The symbolic function of place-names has been demonstrated on many occasions in other contexts¹⁴² and will be discussed in further detail below (see 6.11). Since the Lega's beginnings, party activists have realised the value that manipulation of the linguistic landscape (see 1.6 above) could have for raising awareness of their movement, and they began a graffiti campaign to dialectise place-names on road signs. Such action was at first frowned upon, at least in public, by Lega leaders:

Com'era già accaduto in Friuli, in Sardegna, nel Veneto, ecc..., anche a Varese, dai cartelli stradali è stata tolta la E finale per cui si legge Vares alla lombarda, come è stato per millenni e non più Varese all'italiana. [...] E' vero però che la correzione dei cartelli stradali non è contemplata dalle leggi vigenti e, se si vuole che Varese sia anche Vares, la via da seguire è quella della mozione al Consiglio comunale, richiedendo che vengano installati cartelli bilingui.¹⁴³

¹⁴² Guy Puzey, 'Planning the Linguistic Landscape: A Comparative Survey of the Use of Minority Languages in the Road Signage of Norway, Scotland and Italy' (unpublished MSc dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 2007).

¹⁴³ Giuseppe Leoni, 'Vares: nel cuore della Lombardia', *Lombardia Autonomista*, 4.7 (May 1986), p. 3.

As had already happened in Friuli, in Sardinia, in Veneto, etc..., in Varese too, the final E has been removed from the road signs so that they read Vares, *alla lombarda*, as it has been for millennia, and no longer Varese, *all'italiana*. [...] It is, however, true that the correction of road signs is not provided for by current laws and, if we want Varese also to be Vares, then the path to follow is that of a motion to the municipal council, requesting that bilingual signs are installed.

The party leadership had already been quite supportive of other, more general graffiti acts. When the mayor of Almenno San Salvatore wrote to the Bergamo provincial office of the Lega, asking them to remove graffiti that was apparently written by their supporters, Bossi responded that it was important for the population to identify with their movement. Underlining what he saw as the Roman bias of the media, he claimed that the walls were a valuable means of communication.

Certo, se si riuscisse a togliere di mezzo anche i muretti, il cerchio sarebbe perfetto: nessuno insulterebbe più la democrazia, i lombardi continuerebbero a subire passivamente le scelte della cricca romana e dei suoi lacchè e il silenzio regnerebbe sovrano.¹⁴⁴

Sure, if they managed to get rid of the walls too, the circle would be complete: nobody would insult democracy any more, the Lombards would continue passively to suffer the choices of the Roman clique and its lackeys, and silence would reign sovereign.

Elsewhere, Bossi has called walls the '*libro dei popoli*' (book of peoples).¹⁴⁵ More recently, the party leadership has been more vocal in its support of graffiti actions against road signs as well.

In order to dialectise signs, the most common strategy adopted involves simply removing the vowel endings of the Italian names, either by painting over them, most

¹⁴⁴ [Umberto Bossi], 'Al segretario della Lega', *Lombardia Autonomista*, 35 (December 1985), p. 3.

¹⁴⁵ Interviewed in Costantini, p. 216.

typically with the Lega's own 'Padanian' shade of green, or by covering them with Lega stickers (see figures 4.14, 4.16 and 4.20). The campaign has been labelled as ridiculous by some, but it has also helped the party to achieve some notoriety due to the many articles that have appeared in the press.¹⁴⁶ Furthermore, it increased the visibility of the Lega in a way that identified the movement very closely with the territory in which it operated. The use of the graffiti medium is also significant. The careful positioning of graffiti can allow for its impact to be maximised, and the message may remain visible for years, or even decades. Mural writing can mimic the oral style of discourse associated with the Lega and, as already mentioned, the Lega's posters are also reminiscent of graffiti (see 4.4.4 above).



Figure 4.14 A boundary sign in Milan dialectised with white paint in the 1980s. The use of white paint in road sign dialectisation is much rarer today. Photograph printed in *Lombardia Autonomista*, 6.15-19 (August 1988), p. 3.

¹⁴⁶ Tambini, p. 48.



Figure 4.15 Leghist graffiti, in typical Padanian green: '[For a] free North'. This typical result of a *ciulada* (see below) was to be found on a bus stop shelter at Rancio Valcuvia (Province of Varese). Photograph by the author, January 2007.



Figure 4.16 This municipal boundary sign in Luino (Varese) has been dialectised with brown paint to match the backing of the main sign plate. Most graffiti action against signs does, however, involve more vibrant colours or stickers, possibly to make the intervention more obvious, with Padanian green (see figure 4.15 above) being particularly popular. Photograph by the author, December 2006.

The implication of disobedience in graffiti writing is strengthened by its use on road signs, which are, after all, state property. This made the campaign controversial from the outset, as remembered by Vincenzo Consolo:

Quella della Lega non è un'ideologia, è un risentimento. È spaventoso. Ho avvertito il primo segno dell'imbarbarimento quando ho cominciato a notare i cartelli stradali riscritti in dialetto lombardo. Quella regressione linguistica, per me scrittore, era un segno allarmante di qualcos'altro.¹⁴⁷

The ideology of the Lega is not an ideology: it is resentment. And it is frightening. I noticed the first sign of this barbarisation when I started to notice the road signs rewritten in Lombard dialect. That linguistic reversion, for me as a writer, was an alarming sign of something else.

Some of the graffiti actions could be regarded as part of what members of the MGP call their *ciulade*. This sexual dialect expletive here implies spontaneous, clandestine and rebellious or disrespectful actions, in the case of the Lega usually painting slogans on roadside walls, and often carried out under the cover of darkness. The MGP website has a section dedicated to these *ciulade*, with several hundred photographs uploaded of graffiti slogans.¹⁴⁸ There are many different slogans shown, some in a form of dialect, such as '*Mei 'n di de padan che cent' an de 'talian*' ('Better one day as a Padanian than one hundred years as an Italian'), from Appiano Gentile (Como). Interestingly, there are no examples of road sign graffiti shown on this website section, which may indicate that road sign actions are deemed to be more serious in nature than other graffiti.

In the Council of Europe Recommendation 928 (1981), the Parliamentary Assembly recommended that governments should adopt place-names in the 'original languages of

¹⁴⁷ Vincenzo Consolo, *Il manifesto*, 20 June 1993, cited in *Arrivano i barbari*, p. 184.

¹⁴⁸ Movimento Giovani Padani, 'Tutte le foto delle ciulade' <<http://www.giovanipadani.leganord.org/ciulada.asp>> [accessed 13 January 2011].

each territory, however small'.¹⁴⁹ Although the implementation of this recommendation was left to national governments, the Lega considered taking the case of the lack of bilingual signage in northern Italy to the European Parliament in 1988, as they believed the sole use of the '*lingua mandarino-romana*' ('Mandarin-Roman language') was unlawful.¹⁵⁰ The Lega was apparently initially unsure of the difference between the European Parliament (i.e. the parliament of the European Communities, as they were at the time), and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, a separate organisation. Some of the already autonomous regions in Italy had made provisions for the use of minority place-names, but in other regions only a few individual municipalities had taken such initiatives, including Magreglio-Magrèj in Lombardy (see figure 4.17). Gradually, other municipalities introduced bilingual signs at their boundaries, including Monza-Munscia in 1989, when the DC-PSI majority supported the Lega's request.¹⁵¹

Bossi drafted a Senate bill (number 1345) in October 1988 for the adoption of the Council of Europe recommendation throughout Italy.¹⁵² This proposal, which was not passed, was not limited only to road signs, but would also have involved railway and other public transport companies, as well as tourist boards. Also, as street names are frequently changed in Italy to honour individuals, organisations or events, Bossi's proposal would have forbidden municipalities from doing so if it meant that a historic name were to be lost.

¹⁴⁹ Council of Europe, Recommendation 928 (1981) <<http://assembly.coe.int/Mainf.asp?link=/Documents/AdoptedText/ta81/EREC928.htm>> [accessed 13 January 2011].

¹⁵⁰ *Lombardia Autonomista*, 'La Lega Lombarda ricorre a Strasburgo', 6.15-19 (August 1988), p. 3.

¹⁵¹ Corrado Galimberti, 'Il Parlamento europeo ordina la toponomastica bilingue: Munscia si allinea all'Europa', *Lombardia Autonomista*, 26 July 1989, p. 2.

¹⁵² Umberto Bossi, 'Segnaletica stradale in Lombardo: Disegno di legge', *Lombardia Autonomista*, 6.25 (October 1988), p. 4.

The opposition to the loss of old street names is very reminiscent of Gramsci's commentary on the changing street names of Turin in 1917:

Armata di enciclopedia e di scure [la commissione municipale per la denominazione delle vie] procede allo sventramento della vecchia Torino. Cadono i vecchi nomi, i nomi tradizionali della Torino popolare, che ricordano la vita fervida del vecchio comune medioevale, la fantasia esuberante e originale degli artigiani del Rinascimento meno enciclopedici, ma più pratici e di buon gusto dei mercanti odierni. Si sostituiscono i nomi medaglia. Lo stradario diventa un medagliere.¹⁵³

Armed with an encyclopedia and an axe, [the municipal street naming commission] is proceeding with the evisceration of the old Turin. The old names come down, the traditional names of popular Turin that record the fervent life of the old medieval commune, the exuberant and original imagination of the Renaissance artisans, less encyclopedic but more practical and with better taste than the merchants of today. They are replaced with medal names. The street map becomes a medal showcase.



Figure 4.17 Magreglio-Magrèj (Como) was the first municipality in Lombardy with official bilingual signs. Photograph printed in *Lombardia Autonomista*, 6.25 (October 1988), p. 4.

¹⁵³ Gramsci, *La città futura*, p. 183.

From the late 1990s, a growing number of municipalities under Lega administrations were erecting official dialect signs. As the Italian *Codice della Strada* (Road Traffic Act) did not allow for signs in languages other than Italian outside officially bilingual areas such as Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtirol or the Aosta Valley, at least one Mayor was fined by the Carabinieri for putting up such signs.¹⁵⁴ Following pressure from the Lega, the new Road Traffic Act, passed during Berlusconi's second government in 2003, now allows for authorities to use regional languages on municipal boundary signs together with Italian. Normally, this might amount to the name of the place in question, usually on a small plate, beneath the main sign with the standard Italian place-name (see figure 4.18 below). The amendment to allow this was passed in the Chamber of Deputies by 222 votes against 196.¹⁵⁵

The promotion of dialects in the linguistic landscape has given the Lega free publicity, but it does not seem to have inspired greater respect for dialects outside the party's own ranks. With their recognition on official road signs, dialect place-names might have lost their possibly subversive connotations to become instead part of local '(banal) folklore'.¹⁵⁶ Some people are still quite strongly opposed to the signs and, in a few cases, there have been backlash actions to undo graffiti dialectisation or to Italianise official dialect signs (see figures 4.18-4.20 below). This reaction would appear to be due in large part to what the Lega represents more broadly, as a challenger to the integrity of the Italian Republic, the most vociferous anti-immigration party in Italy, and part of the current Berlusconi government.

¹⁵⁴ Guy Puzey, 'Signscapes and Minority Languages: Language Conflict on the Street', in *Word on the Street: Reading, Writing & Inhabiting Public Space*, ed. by Elisha Foust and Sophie Fuggle (London: Institute of Germanic & Romance Studies, in press).

¹⁵⁵ Camera dei Deputati, Resoconto stenografico dell'Assemblea, sitting 342, 17 July 2003, p. 35.

¹⁵⁶ Silvia Dal Negro, 'Local Policy Modeling the Linguistic Landscape', in *Linguistic Landscape: Expanding the Scenery*, ed. by Elana Shohamy and Durk Gorter (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), pp. 206-218 (p. 210).



Figure 4.18 The official dialect plate on the boundary sign in Gemonio-Gimon (Varese), where Bossi has his residence, has been (imperfectly) Italianised using blue spray paint. Graffiti dialectisations are occasionally incorrect too, and sometimes create hypercorrect dialect names.¹⁵⁷ Photograph by the author, December 2007.



Figure 4.19 Lega Lombarda stickers had been used on this sign in Mesenzana (Varese) to obscure the final letters of *Varese*, *Mesenzana* and *Brissago*, but the stickers have been torn off. Photograph by the author, January 2007.

¹⁵⁷ Puzey, 'Planning the Linguistic Landscape', pp. 103-104.



Figure 4.20 This Lega Lombarda/Lega Nord sticker has been used to dialectise the name *Sarigo* on a sign in Germignaga (Varese). The sign is at waist height, and the scratched sticker has evidently been a target for anti-Leghists. Photograph by the author, December 2006.



Figure 4.21 This MGP poster for a protest against Romano Prodi's government on 2 December 2006 revisits the golden egg motif (see 4.4.4 above), with Prodi portrayed as the 'Roman' woman, with the red text in dialect 'The thief from Rome', but it also demonstrates how young Leghists use certain place-names from outside 'Padania'. To show their disrespect for Rome, the capital letter R has been demoted to lower case. Image from the MGP website: <<http://www.giovanipadani.leganord.org/archiviovolantini/20061202ManifestazioneGiovaniPadanitris.jpg>> [accessed 10 January 2011].

In May 2009, the electronic destination signs in the carriages of a commuter train from Milan to Laveno Mombello were altered by a crew member to read the dialect place-name 'LAVEN MUMBELL'. A statement from a spokesperson for the company Ferrovie Nord revealed the persistence of the attitude that dialects are not fit to be used in professional contexts: *'anche se apparentemente sembra una leggerezza anche simpatica l'azienda ha comunque una sua immagine e un'ufficialità da rispettare'* ('even though it apparently seems to be an act of flippancy, and quite a pleasant one at that, the company still has its image and an official character to be respected').¹⁵⁸

The Lega's campaign for official use of dialect place-names has also inspired satire. Provoked by the new Road Traffic Act, a journalist from Rome compiled a book of tongue-in-cheek translations and alternative interpretations of road signs in Roman dialect. For example, a minimum speed limit sign is explained as *'nun annate come le lumache'* ('don't drive like snails').¹⁵⁹

4.4.6 Dialects in education

A certain interest was expressed by the Lega, in its early years, for minority language education, as evidenced by an early article on schooling in the Basque Country.¹⁶⁰ Not long afterwards, a short article appeared on the training of Sardinian language tutors by an organisation in Sassari. Although the same page carried news of the coming publication of the Circolo Filologico Lombardo's dictionary of the Varese dialect and plans for pilot

¹⁵⁸ *VareseNews*, "'Prossima fermata Laven Mumbell'", 22 May 2009

<<http://www3.varesenews.it/varese/articolo.php?id=142051>> [accessed 11 August 2009].

¹⁵⁹ Tonino Tosto, *Roma de cartello* (Rome: EDUP, 2004), p. 30.

¹⁶⁰ *Lombardia Autonomista*, 'La scuola delle nazioni senza stato: Ikastolak – gli asili infantili in lingua basca', 18 (March 1984), p. 3.

language courses, the article criticised the approach of other Lombard language organisations:

Se in Sardegna c'è la grande attività di S'Iscola Sarda, in Lombardia c'è invece il desolante silenzio dei vari Circolo Filologico Milanese, Cenacolo dei poeti milanesi, Famiglia Meneghina e di tante altre 'Famiglie' lombarde trasformate in luoghi di ritrovo per bempensanti che considerano la lingua lombarda un reperto archeologico da mettere al museo.¹⁶¹

If in Sardinia there is the great activity of S'Iscola Sarda [the Sardinian School], in Lombardy, on the contrary, there is the distressing silence variously from the Circolo Filologico Milanese, Cenacolo dei poeti milanesi [the Cenacle of Milanese Poets], Famiglia Meneghina [a Milanese local history and folklore society] and of many other Lombard '*Famiglie*' ['families'] that have been transformed into meeting places for priggish people who consider the Lombard language to be an archeological object to be put in a museum.

In 1985, the Lega established the Associazione Lombarda degli Insegnanti (Lombard Association of Teachers), which aimed to spread Lombard culture threatened by '*l'aggressione coloniale romana*' ('Roman colonial aggression').¹⁶² One of the first concrete proposals on dialect in education to be published by the Lega came from a young supporter who suggested that, as religious education was made optional in 1986, the free hour that some pupils had could be used to teach about Lombard dialects, culture and literature.¹⁶³

¹⁶¹ *Lombardia Autonomista*, 'S'Iscola Sarda', 20 (September 1984), p. 2.

¹⁶² *Lombardia Autonomista*, 'Associazione Lombarda degli Insegnanti', 29 (April 1985), p. 4.

¹⁶³ *Lombardia Autonomista*, 'Acqua de Riaa', 4.16 (September 1986), p. 4.



Figure 4.22 This Lega Nord poster from February 1996 reproduced verbatim the message of a poster from 1986. 'That's enough colonial schooling! [Lega Nord insists] that in our schools, our language should be spoken and our air should be breathed; that our teachers should not stay unemployed to make space to the advantage of others; that our children should become good defenders of our freedoms and not good servants. Reprinted in [Lega Nord], *La Lega Nord attraverso i manifesti*, p. 87.

The issue of dialect education has been given varying degrees of prominence by the Lega. In an early draft of the Lega Lombarda's programme, in June 1983, language policy comes as the third of ten autonomist policies, as part of education policy: '*Difesa e diffusione della cultura e della lingua lombarda attraverso la Scuola*' ('Defence and diffusion of the Lombard

culture and language through the School system').¹⁶⁴ By September, this policy had been relegated to point thirteen of fifteen: '*Il recupero del patrimonio culturale e linguistico lombardo e la sua diffusione attraverso la scuola*' ('The recovery of the Lombard cultural and linguistic patrimony and its diffusion through the school system').¹⁶⁵ For the rest of the decade, its position would vary between a high of second position and a low of eighth position among the Lega's priorities. In the early 1990s, the campaign for teaching dialect vanished from the Lega's programme altogether, apart from a vague reference to adapting the curriculum to suit the pupils' local environment.¹⁶⁶ In the mid-1990s, with the move from federalism to secession, there was a renewed emphasis on ethnic identity to combat '*colonialismo romano*' ('Roman colonialism'), and the Lega once again put forward the idea of using dialects in schools (see figure 4.22 above).¹⁶⁷ In 1998, Bossi's wife Manuela Marrone set up a private school in Varese, the Scuola Bosina, which allows pupils to learn about dialects and local traditions.

One area of particular attention for the Lega has concerned the regional origins of teachers, with the Lega recommending that teachers should come from the local community, citing the problems, as they saw it, of teachers from other regions, including '*la difficoltà di comprensione linguistica a livello di pronuncia*' ('the difficulty of linguistic comprehension at the level of pronunciation') among other prejudiced factors, such as '*un assenteismo marcato*' ('marked absenteeism').¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁴ *Lombardia Autonomista*, 'Autonomia è', 13 (June 1983), p. 2.

¹⁶⁵ *Lombardia Autonomista*, 'Programma politico', 14 (September 1983), pp. 2-3.

¹⁶⁶ Stefano Allievi, *Le parole della Lega: Il movimento politico che vuole un'altra Italia* (Milan: Garzanti, 1992), p. 59.

¹⁶⁷ Biorcio, *La Padania promessa*, p. 88.

¹⁶⁸ Giacomo Bianchi, 'Intervento alla Provincia di Varese: Scuola regionale', *Lombardia Autonomista*, 4.18 (November 1986), p. 2.

4.4.7 A return to the dialect cause?

In 1992, Bossi claimed that Italian was an adequate language for Padania:

Ma che lingua vuole che si parli [nella Padania]? Naturalmente l'italiano. Su questa storia dei dialetti abbiamo riflettuto. E siamo arrivati alla conclusione che è meglio soprassedere... La Padania non ha prodotto una lingua comune, come la Catalogna. E allora non resta se non l'italiano, che non è poi da buttar via come lingua.¹⁶⁹

Well what language would you want us to speak [in Padania]? Italian, naturally. We have reflected upon this thing with dialects, and we have reached the conclusion that it is best to postpone it... Padania hasn't produced a common language, like Catalonia has, so the only thing left is Italian, which isn't exactly worthless, as languages go.

However, once associated with dialects, the Lega would find it difficult to disassociate itself.

The dialect issue continues to surface frequently, especially in connection with municipalities debating whether to install bilingual road signs or with the debate on dialects in education. As anthropologist Jillian Cavanaugh also found in Bergamo, an individual's political affiliation often determines their views on dialect road signs, and the campaign has been a veritable 'lightning rod' for debate.¹⁷⁰

Many left-wing Italians, in particular, 'still find it difficult to not associate an interest in the dialects with a "legghista" right-wing viewpoint',¹⁷¹ which is a considerable problem for the promotion of dialects in itself. The Lega is not, after all, the only association promoting Lombard dialects in northern Italy. When the Lega was growing in the 1980s,

¹⁶⁹ Umberto Bossi, interviewed by Saverio Vertone, *Europeo*, 29 May 1992, cited in *Arrivano i barbari*, p. 101.

¹⁷⁰ Jillian R. Cavanaugh, *Living Memory: The Social Aesthetics of Language in a Northern Italian Town* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), p. 175.

¹⁷¹ Paolo Coluzzi, *Minority Language Planning and Micronationalism in Italy: An Analysis of the Situation of Friulian, Cimbrian and Western Lombard with Reference to Spanish Minority Languages* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2007), p. 296.

there were other political campaigns that also used slogans in Lombard dialect, for example 'Nüclear? No per piase!' ('Nuclear? No thanks!') or 'Pedalemm un cicinin' ('Let's pedal a wee bit').¹⁷² One local cultural association, La Vus de l'Insübria (The Voice of Insubria), which has been active since 2004 and has offered dialect courses and online materials, saw it necessary to specify in no uncertain terms in their constitution that they were not a political group:

L'associazione ha carattere prettamente culturale e scientifico. E' completamente apolitica e apartitica. L'associazione non è in alcun modo collegata con movimenti o partiti politici. L'associazione Culturale 'La Vus de l'Insübria' è formata da studiosi, ricercatori e appassionati [...]. L'associazione [...] non potrà svolgere attività diverse da quelle pertinenti con il proprio scopo primario o a questo comunque connesse.¹⁷³

The association is of a strictly cultural and scientific character. It is completely apolitical and non-party-oriented. The association is in no way connected with political movements or parties. The cultural association 'La Vus de l'Insübria' [Insubria is a commonly used name for the area where Western Lombard dialects are spoken] is made up of scholars, researchers and enthusiasts [...]. The association [...] will not be allowed to carry out activities other than those pertinent to its own primary aim or in some way connected to this aim.

Another group, Domà Nunch (Only Us), was formed in Milan in 2006 around the relaunched magazine *El dragh bloeu*. This association does have an openly political aspect, embracing 'econazionalismo' ('econationalism'):

DOMÀ NUNCH l'è ona associazion econazionalista che l'ha gh'ha come sò ultim fin la sovranità de la NAZION INSUBRA in d'on'öttica de salvaguardia e difesa de la nòstra Terra perchè l'è la Mamma de la nòstra Nazion.

¹⁷² Giorgio Fiocchi, 'Dialetti in Lombardia: Patrimonio culturale da non sprecare', *Spazio Libero*; repr. in *Lombardia Autonomista*, 4.16 (September 1986), p. 2.

¹⁷³ La Vus de l'Insübria, 'Estratto dallo statuto dell'associazione "La Vus de l'Insübria"' <<http://www.giurnal.org/pagine/statuto.htm>> [accessed 13 January 2011].

L'è per quest che el tema de la Padania el ne lassa on pò tevid, a meno chè la se considera come mezzo per mett insemma di Nazion sovrann che deciden liberament de giontass insemma.¹⁷⁴

DOMÀ NUNCH is an econationalist association that has, as its ultimate aim, the sovereignty of the INSUBRIAN NATION from a perspective of safeguarding and defending our Earth, because it is the Mother of our Nation.

It is because of this that the subject of Padania leaves us quite lukewarm, unless it is considered as a means of bringing together sovereign Nations that decide freely to unite.

It also seems that the Lega's decentralising dialect actions may have provoked some parliamentarians from other parties to press for changes to the Constitution, to protect the centre from the peripheries. Although Article 1 of Law 482 (1999) on minority languages (see 4.3 above) had already declared Italian to be the official language of the Republic, a succession of bills has been presented to the Chamber of Deputies for the inclusion of this recognition in the Constitution. The absence of any references in the Constitution to Italian as the official language of the Republic may be explained by the fact that these would have seemed superfluous at the time the Constitution was drafted.¹⁷⁵ It is, however, also possible that the founders of the Italian Constitution exercised caution by avoiding to mention Italian as the official language, so as not to deal with a potentially divisive issue so soon after the end of the Second World War.¹⁷⁶ The former constitution, the *Statuto Albertino* (Albertine Statute) of 1848, had, however, stated in its Article 62 that Italian was the official language of Parliament, although French could also be used either by members who came from places where it was spoken, or in order to respond to those members.

¹⁷⁴ Johnny Reb, 'L'editorial', *El dragh bloeu*, 4 (2006), p. 3.

¹⁷⁵ Marazzini, *Da Dante alla lingua selvaggia*, p. 196.

¹⁷⁶ Raffaele Simone, 'L'italiano è di destra?', *Italiano e oltre*, 16 (2001), pp. 196-197.

The first of the recent series of bills, Chamber Bill 4424 (1997) does, however, predate the approval of the law on minority languages. It was presented by Pietro Mitolo (of the right-wing AN) and sought to modify Article 12 of the Constitution – which stipulates that the *tricolore* is the flag of the Republic – in order also to state that Italian was the official language. The bill was opposed by the Lega, by PRC, by the parties representing linguistic minorities and by the Partito dei Comunisti Italiani (Party of Italian Communists – PdCI). The components of this unlikely coalition were opposed for different reasons. The Lega wanted local languages or ‘idioms’ to be recognised and put forward a number of amendments to this effect, which were all blocked. The minority language parties believed the bill could act as a pretext to future curtailment of their rights, while the PRC and PdCI were concerned of the nationalist tones of the proposed change and the threat to diversity that it posed.¹⁷⁷ The bill was approved by the Chamber on 26 July 2000. It was passed to the Senate, where the committee completed its examination of the bill, but the Senate did not debate it before the end of that parliament.

In the next parliament, Angela Napoli (AN) put forward Chamber Bill 750 (2001), which proposed the same change to Article 12 of the Constitution. Ignazio La Russa (AN), with widespread support from right-wing members, made the same proposal in Chamber Bill 1396 (2001), although with stronger nationalist rhetoric in the supporting statement attached to the bill. A trio of left-wing deputies also proposed the constitutional amendment in Chamber Bill 2289 (2002). When a unified bill was presented to the Chamber on 26 March 2002, an amendment was approved that had been proposed by the Lega, and supported by AN, in particular. With this amendment, in addition to the reference to the official language of the Republic, the bill would have added to Article 12 a statement that ‘*La Repubblica*

¹⁷⁷ Camera dei Deputati, Resoconto stenografico dell’Assemblea, sitting 770, 26 July 2000.

valorizza gli idiomi locali ('The Republic values local idioms'). The bill was then supported by the Lega, but was still opposed by PRC and PdCI, as well as by the parties representing linguistic minorities. Stating her opposition to the bill, Elettra Deiana (PRC) suggested that it went against the interests of immigrants wishing to acquire citizenship and that the Italian language could become '*uno strumento ideologico di confinamento e di costruzione di una differenza che non ci porterà nessun vantaggio*' ('an ideological instrument of confinement and one that constructs differences that will not offer us any advantages').¹⁷⁸ Parts of the main centre-left bloc also voted against the bill due to the Lega's amendment, with Riccardo Marone of the Democratici di Sinistra (Democrats of the Left) claiming that it was '*null'altro che un tentativo di riconquistare una posizione unitaria della maggioranza su un tema politico che li vede profondamente divisi*' ('nothing else than an attempt by the [centre-right] majority to regain a united position on a political issue on which they are deeply divided').¹⁷⁹ Although Marco Boato (FdV) agreed with the progress the amendment would mean for linguistic diversity, he was not impressed by the political compromise that had brought it about, and some hoped the term 'idioms' could be improved upon by the Senate. The amendment was passed by 221 votes against 162, and the bill was later passed on to the Senate, but it remained on the drawing board.

The same debate surfaced again in the next parliament, with Angela Napoli's Chamber Bill 648 (2006) and Ignazio La Russa's – and the rest of AN's – Chamber Bill 1571 (2006) both proposing the original change to the Constitution, with no reference to local 'idioms'. Marco Boati submitted Chamber Bill 1782 (2006) including the amended text referring to idioms. Then came a new proposal from a group of centre-left and left-wing

¹⁷⁸ Camera dei Deputati, Resoconto stenografico dell'Assemblea, sitting 123, 26 March 2002, p. 109.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 114.

deputies headed by Roberto Zaccaria of the Partito Democratico (Democratic Party), which sought to add the following conciliatory text to Article 12 of the Constitution: '*L'italiano è la lingua ufficiale della Repubblica nel rispetto delle garanzie previste dalla Costituzione e dalle leggi costituzionali*' ('Italian is the official language of the Republic subject to the guarantees as provided by the Constitution and by constitutional laws'). This avoided making a statement that was too demagogic, while also paying respect to the linguistic minorities already protected by the Constitution. It also prevented the article from impinging on constitutional freedoms. The unified bill, adopting Zaccaria's text, led to a drawn-out debate in the Chamber on 28 March 2007 in which the PRC, in particular, maintained its previous reservations, and the Lega failed to gain support for an amendment to include dialects. The bill was approved by 361 votes against 75, after which Leghist deputies unfurled regional flags and AN deputies sung the Italian national anthem and waved the Italian flag.¹⁸⁰ The bill was passed to the Senate but was put aside for the duration of that parliament.

In 2008, Zaccaria, La Russa and Napoli (adopting Zaccaria's text) presented their bills again, but they are currently (in January 2011) still waiting to be considered. In 2009, however, Chamber Bill 2768 was presented by a group of IdV deputies, led by Anita Di Giuseppe, proposing to modify Article 9 of the Constitution instead of Article 12. Article 9 currently deals with the promotion of culture and research as well as the protection of Italy's historical and artistic patrimony, and the proposal is to add that the Republic also '*riconosce la lingua italiana come fondamento culturale della Nazione e propria lingua ufficiale*' ('recognises the Italian language as the cultural foundation of the Nation and as its official language'). The proposal was seconded in the form of Chamber Bill 3148 (2010) by Cosimo Ventucci and

¹⁸⁰ Camera dei Deputati, Resoconto stenografico dell'Assemblea, sitting 136, 28 March 2007.

Giancarlo Lehner, both of the Popolo della Libertà (People of Freedom). Neither of these bills have been taken up at the committee stage yet.

There have been signals, in the meantime, that the Lega may be returning to the dialect question. The Lega has made itself busy with bills in favour of dialects. Apart from the amendment to the *Codice della Strada* in 2003 (see 4.4.5 above) and a number of bills specific to certain regions, the Lega's Federico Bricolo has, for example, drafted Senate Bill 1582 (2009) on the teaching of dialects in schools, and deputy Pierguido Vanalli has presented Chamber Bill 2030 (2008), which would allow civil wedding vows to be read, in addition to Italian, also in '*lingua locale*' ('local language'). Although these bills have not yet been discussed in Parliament, the first wedding ceremony in dialect was held in Como in 2009, officiated by a Leghist local councillor, Diego Peverelli.¹⁸¹ Peverelli had previously introduced a dialect option on the municipal council's automatic call receiving service, for which he provided his own voice.¹⁸²

Marco Lupi, a Lega councillor in Sanremo, where a televised national competitive popular music festival is held every year, proposed in 2009 that the rules should be altered to allow songs to be performed entirely in dialects.¹⁸³ The rules were indeed changed later that year: although they still stipulate that songs must be in the Italian language, they also state that dialects are considered part of the Italian language. In 2010, the first artists to perform in dialect were Nino D'Angelo and Maria Nazionale, singing *Jammo jà* in

¹⁸¹ *La Provincia*, 'Io vi dichiaro "marì e mijé": Ecco il matrimonio in dialetto', 2 September 2009 <http://www.laprovinciadico.como.it/stories/Cronaca/88025_io_vi_dichiaro_mar_e_mij_ecco_il_matrimonio_in_dialetto/> [accessed 10 January 2011].

¹⁸² *CiaoComo*, 'E il dialetto fa impazzire il centralino del comune: 3.500 chiamate', 9 May 2008 <http://www.ciaocomo.it/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=7688&Itemid=35> [accessed 10 January 2011].

¹⁸³ *L'Unità*, 'Sanremo, la Lega sogna un festival in dialetto', 30 July 2009 <<http://www.unita.it/index.php?section=news&idNotizia=86912>> [accessed 30 July 2009].

Neapolitan. For the 2011 edition, Davide Van De Sfroos, a singer-songwriter from Como, has announced that he will perform *Yanez* in Lombard, and that he is considering the use of subtitles. His songs are popular with Leghists, but he has underlined that he is not attending to represent Padania.¹⁸⁴ Apparently in order to distance himself further from the Lega, he will also be performing *Viva l'Italia* (Long Live Italy), a song by Francesco De Gregori that tells the recent history of Italy, for good and for bad. Significantly, it was written in the 1970s and is synonymous with the drive in various Italian political subcultures to overcome the violent political tension of that decade. Van De Sfroos has been criticised heavily for this choice, even if it was not his own decision, in the Lega's newspaper *La Padania*:

[...] è chiaro il contrappasso: canta pure nella tua lingua, ma per evitare l'odioso sospetto che il dialetto [...] sia una bandiera leghista, beccati De Gregori.

Peccato che, così facendo, Van De Sfroos sia passato dalle simpatie leghiste al piegare la testa alla voracità militante della sinistra.¹⁸⁵

[...] the retort is clear: of course you can sing in your language, but in order to avoid the odious suspicion that dialect [...] is a Leghist banner, cop a load of De Gregori.

It is a shame that, in doing so, Van De Sfroos has passed out of Leghist favour to bow his head to the militant voracity of the left.

The choice of *Viva l'Italia* is also dictated by the fact that 2011 marks the 150th anniversary of Italian Unification. In order to commemorate this occasion, state broadcasters RAI created a series of five thirty-second promotional films directed by Alessandro D'Alatri, to be shown towards the end of 2010 and intended to encourage viewers to pay their television licence. Each short shows a series of situations in which people speak in various

¹⁸⁴ Andrea Laffranchi, 'Van De Sfroos: Porto il comasco a Sanremo ma non per dividere', *Corriere della Sera*, 17 December 2010, p. 59.

¹⁸⁵ Massimiliano Capitanio, 'Davide, che errore cantare "Viva l'Italia"', *La Padania*, 9-10 January 2011, p. 8.

dialects. Speaking in dialect apparently makes them incomprehensible to their interlocutors, who respond 'Eh?' ('Huh?'). A somewhat patronising voice at the end of each film proclaims: *'Se gli Italiani fossero quelli di 150 anni fa, probabilmente comunicherebbero ancora così. Da allora abbiamo fatto un cammino molto importante. E la Rai è sempre stata con noi. Rai: Fratelli d'Italia'* ('If the Italians were the same as 150 years ago, they would probably still communicate like this. Since then, we have made some very important progress. And RAI has always been with us. RAI: Brothers of Italy [citing the first line of the Italian national anthem]'). Although the scenes depicted in the films may have been meant ironically, it is clear that it can be dangerous to joke about language. The Lega's television channel TelePadania – which also broadcasts weekly news bulletins in dialect – launched a response to the RAI shorts. Against the background of the Padanian 'national anthem', Giuseppe Verdi's *Va, pensiero*, deputy Marco Desiderati is the first to speak, telling viewers in dialect not to pay their television licences, which he describes as a ploy by the centralised state. After other Lega exponents have also criticised RAI in dialect, the film ends with the TelePadania logo superimposed over a fluttering Padanian flag, together with the text, in standard Italian, *'La TV che parla tante lingue / Anche la tua'* ('The TV channel that speaks many languages / Yours too'). A heavily northern-accented, but otherwise standard Italian, voice says: *'Di ridicolo c'è solo il vostro canone, non le nostre lingue'* ('The only thing that's ridiculous is your television licence, not our languages').

Although the Lega still seems keen to put forward bills favouring dialects or to lobby organisations such as RAI to treat dialects differently, when members of the party actually have the power to make policy decisions that could support dialects, they does not always

do so. The Lega administration in Piedmont, for example, recently reduced the regional funds allocated to the *Atlante linguistico italiano* (Italian Linguistic Atlas).¹⁸⁶

In spite of the Lega's dialect actions, its outlook cannot be described as tolerant towards languages or towards minorities. Lombardy's *assessore* (part of the regional president's cabinet) for culture, the Lega's Massimo Zanello, boycotted a regional awards ceremony because it was hosted by Rula Jebreal, a Palestinian journalist whom he claimed had no connection with Lombardy and could not speak Italian, even though she presented for Italian television.¹⁸⁷ Indeed, the use of dialects to construct regional or national identity may also have more extreme consequences if this identity is only a front for other ideas. A French documentary¹⁸⁸ about the new right-wing movements of Europe showed one Lega Nord MEP, Mario Borghezio, visiting a group of Niçois *identitaires* (identity activists). After his main presentation, the film-makers' microphones picked up some advice he was offering the Niçois activists:

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| Borghezio: | Il faut rentrer dans les administrations et les petits pays. Il faut insister beaucoup sur le côté régionaliste de votre mouvement. |
| Identitaire niçois: | Jouer le régionalisme, c'est plus facile pour les italiens que pour nous. |
| Borghezio: | Oui mais c'est une bonne manière de ne pas être classé comme fasciste nostalgique, mais comme une nouvelle mouvance régionale, catholique, etc... mais en dessous nous sommes toujours les mêmes. |

¹⁸⁶ Raphaël Zanotti, 'Italia, chi ha paura dei dialetti?', *La Stampa*, 26 January 2011 <<http://www3.lastampa.it/libri/sezioni/news/articolo/istp/386060/>> [accessed 26 January 2011].

¹⁸⁷ Claudio Schirinzi, 'Presenta la Jebreal, la Lega protesta', *Corriere della Sera*, 11 March 2008 <http://www.corriere.it/politica/08_marzo_11/rula_caso_lega_6f8372c6-ef38-11dc-872b-0003ba99c667.shtml> [accessed 11 March 2008].

¹⁸⁸ *Europe: Ascenseur pour les fachos*, dir. by Stéphane Lepetit and Barbara Conforti (Canal+, 13 March 2009).

- | | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Borghezio: | You have to get into councils and in small villages. You have to put great emphasis on the regionalist aspect of your movement. |
| Niçois identity activist: | Playing regionalism is easier for the Italians than for us. |
| Borghezio: | Yes but it's a good way not to be classed as a nostalgic fascist, but as a new regional or Catholic centre of influence, etc... but underneath we're still the same. |

The Lega claims to be struggling for the peripheries against the centre, while actually representing the most economically developed areas of Italy, and it has now become an integral part of the political hegemony. The movement's cultural contradictions are highly complex. As one final example of such contradictions, although the Lega once commended the celebration of a mass in Milanese,¹⁸⁹ at least one section of the MGP youth movement appears to have embraced Latin as the language of religion (see figure 4.23 below).

¹⁸⁹ *Lombardia Autonomista*, 'Finalmente la lingua del popolo sull'altare: Celebrata a Milano la prima messa in lombardo', 5.5 (May 1987), p. 5.



Figure 4.23 A poster for the '1st Europe of the Peoples Festival' organised by a local MGP section in Emilia-Romagna, 11-13 July 2003. As well as the many flags of minority or minorised European populations (presumably the Swedish flag refers to Swedish speakers in Finland), note on the programme for Saturday 12 July '*Messa tradizionale in latino*' ('Traditional mass in Latin'), followed by the '*Concerto dei "Death Army"*' ('Concert by "Death Army"'). Image from the MGP website: <<http://www.giovanipadani.leganord.org/archiviomanifesti/ManifestoMontefiorino.jpg>> [accessed 10 January 2011].

5 The Development of the Norwegian Language Question

5.1 A language struggle between the national and the social

There are a number of models that have been put forward to explain the Norwegian language struggle. One of the most influential models has been what Ernst Håkon Jahr calls '*den nasjonale-sosiale forklaringsmodellen*' ('the national-social explanatory model').¹ This model suggests that there have been two central ideologies behind the struggle, firstly a national ideal that was dominant until 1917, after which the social or democratic justifications for the various language movements became more prevalent. In addition to this explanation, and to models that favour either the national or the social aspect alone, there is a pedagogic paradigm, in that the two principal solutions to the language question both aimed to reduce the distance between the written and the spoken language, but this view can also be seen as an integral part of both the national and social concepts.²

Lars Vikør has proposed that a development of the social explanation – which first became widespread due to its compatibility with ideologies that were popular in academic circles in the 1970s – is best placed to account for the direction the Norwegian language debate has taken over time, and that the national aspect was merely used to legitimise the social project.³ Furthermore, democratisation and the expansion of the school system in

¹ Ernst Håkon Jahr, 'Forklaringsmodeller i nyere norsk språkhistorie', in *Språk och social context*, ed. by Ann-Marie Ivars and others (Helsinki: Institutionen för nordiska språk och nordisk kultur, 1993), pp. 121-136.

² Lars S. Vikør, 'Korfor fekk vi språkstrid? Forklaringsmodellar i nyare norsk språkhistorie', in *Helsing til Lars Vassenden på 70-årsdagen*, ed. by Johan Myking, Helge Sandøy and Ivar Utne (Bergen: Nordisk institutt, 1994), pp. 217-224 (pp. 218-219).

³ Ibid., pp. 220-221.

Norway empowered new social groups who, through the efforts of the language movement, might later be led to feel that they were more authentically 'Norwegian' in linguistic and cultural terms than the ruling classes. National and social ideologies were both involved in this process, but it was the social element that was essential.⁴ The national side of the Nynorsk campaign may have helped to win further support for the language but, as will be seen in the next chapter, opposition between proponents of the national and of the social aspects of the language has led to conflict within the movement.

Through an overview of the background to the Norwegian language struggle, it will be seen here and in the following chapter that a hegemonic model can explain the development of different linguistic ideologies in Norway, as well as the progression of the language debate. Although this model is broader, allowing some scope to all previous models, it will for this very reason lead to a broader understanding of the debate, and may help to shed further light on whether any one of the individual ideological battlegrounds in these linguistic wars of position has been more influential than others. The model to be used here will also add weight to the argument that each side of the language debate has itself represented a combination of specific world-views, so that within the Norwegian language debate a dialectic between different political philosophies can also be seen.

5.2 The rise of a Danish linguistic hegemony

In 1349-1350, the Black Death surged through Norway, killing up to two thirds of the population. This severe demographic decline, especially among those who were able to write, together with the weakening of institutions, had an enormous economic, social and political impact on Norway, and consequently on the Norwegian language, which was at

⁴ Ibid., p. 223.

that time developing from Old Norse. The institutional changes in the country were partly the result of royal alliances: Norway had already shared a king with Sweden from 1319 to 1355 and the following king, Håkon VI Magnusson, jointly ruled Norway and Sweden from 1362 to 1364. Håkon married Margaret Valdemarsdatter, daughter of the King of Denmark, and their son Olav inherited both the Norwegian and Danish thrones. Following Olav's early death, his mother eventually succeeded in having her great-nephew Erik of Pomerania appointed king of Norway, Denmark and Sweden, in what became known as the Kalmar Union. There then followed a succession of monarchs who shared various combinations of the three kingdoms. In these struggles for influence, the aftermath of the Black Death was a key factor in the assessment of Norway's value and importance relative to the other two kingdoms.

In this period, a lack of financial means led to a sharp decrease in Norwegian cultural production. No new literature was written in Norwegian, and most writing became restricted to more practical or administrative domains. As power constructs changed, the Swedish and Danish written languages began to gain ground in Norway, but written Norwegian remained in use for a time by the new authorities, especially when they wished to address Norwegian matters. After Norway entered into official union with Denmark in 1450, written Norwegian fell out of use with the highest authorities entirely within approximately thirty years. In other sectors of society, such as among members of the clergy or among ordinary citizens and farmers, written Norwegian continued to prevail into the 1500s.⁵

⁵ Helge Sandøy, 'Seinmellomalderen (1350-1536)', in *Språk og samfunn gjennom tusen år: Ei norsk språkhistorie*, ed. by Olaf Almenningen and others, 6th edn. (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2002), pp. 37-46 (p. 39).

At the same time that written Danish was taking over from Norwegian, the importation of Low German loanwords into Norwegian, which had already been in progress since the 1200s, intensified through the trading links established along the coasts of the Baltic and North Sea by the Hanseatic League.⁶ The most abundant lexical items borrowed were nouns – including a large number of culture words connected to crafts and commerce – and affixes such as *an-*, *be-*, *-he(i)t/-hed*, and *-bar*.⁷ A number of the words borrowed from Low German into the Scandinavian languages replaced words that had previously been in use.⁸ This demonstrates the relatively high prestige of such Low German words.

In 1536, King Christian III unilaterally declared that Norway was now a province of Denmark. From that point, Danish consolidated its status as the *de facto* written language in Norway. Some have claimed that the relationship between Danish and Norwegian was an atypical example of language contact in a colonial situation. Due to the genetic proximity of the languages, it could be claimed that the situation bore more resemblance to one of dialect contact than to language contact.⁹ Others, however, perceive a greater distance between the written Danish language and Norwegian spoken language.¹⁰

The year after the Danish annexation, the Reformation reached Norway, and a Danish translation of the Bible was published in 1550. While a number of other northern European

⁶ Gustav Indrebø, *Norsk målsoga*, 2nd edn. (Bergen: Norsk Bokreidingslag, 2001), p. 124.

⁷ Sandøy, 'Seinmellomalderen', p. 41.

⁸ Vibeke Winge, 'Language Contact Outside Scandinavia VI: With Germany', in *The Nordic Languages: An International Handbook of the History of the North Germanic Languages*, ed. by Oskar Bandle and others, 2 vols (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2002-2005), II (2005), pp. 2096-2104 (p. 2100).

⁹ Gun Widmark, Inge Lise Pedersen and Helge Sandøy, 'The Development of the Nordic Languages from the Mid-16th Century to the End of the 18th Century: Sociolinguistic Aspects', in *The Nordic Languages: An International Handbook of the History of the North Germanic Languages*, ed. by Oskar Bandle and others, 2 vols (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2002-2005), II (2005), pp. 1332-1345 (p. 1340).

¹⁰ Ottar Grepstad, *Viljen til språk* (Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget, 2006), p. 46.

countries saw their own national languages adopt a position of prestige in the religious framework that had previously been held by Latin, in Norway this position was taken by Danish. Following the introduction of printed works, the language became increasingly standardised. In 1629, it was decided that priests from Norway would pursue their education in Denmark. The priests had previously been the closest approximation there was in Norway to organic intellectuals (see 2.2.1 above), but the move to educate them in Denmark certainly weakened their linguistic ties to their parishes. In 1660, education at the University of Copenhagen was made obligatory for certain other professions in Norway. The social status of those who could write consolidated the high status of Danish, as opposed to the subordinate status of the Norwegian dialects that continued to prevail in speech.

In the 1700s, although only few people in Norway could write, most members of the general populace could read, many even before schooling was made compulsory.¹¹ The language that they would generally be reading, and that was being written by the most of those who could write, was known as 'Danish' even by native Norwegians. The school system set up in Norway after 1739 was popularly known as '*den danske Skolen*' ('the Danish school'), as opposed to the 'Latin schools' that had been founded earlier. This name began to fall out of popularity though towards the end of the 1700s, and names such as '*Fattigskole*' ('the school for the poor'), '*Friskole*' ('free school'), '*den offentlige Skole*' ('public school') and '*Almueskole*' ('populace school') began to be used instead.¹² After Norway separated from Denmark in 1814, the school subject previously known as 'Danish' became 'Norwegian' or

¹¹ Grepstad, *Viljen til språk*, p. 39.

¹² Indrebø, p. 382.

'mother tongue'.¹³ In its form, however, the written language taught was still the same Danish.

In the countryside, spoken modern Norwegian developed throughout this period with little influence from Danish.¹⁴ The fact that rural Norwegian dialects had largely been able to continue their own linguistic development separately from Danish may itself be evidence of the great diastatic separation between the written language and rural dialects at the time.

Although spoken Danish was only used by a small élite in Norway, the status of this group of speakers meant that Danish forms of speech did have some impact on spoken language in Norway. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Danification of the Norwegian bourgeoisie and public administration had reached an advanced stage. A high-status formal sociolect had developed among the urban upper-classes based on the Norwegian pronunciation of written Danish. There is evidence that this sociolect was even highly regarded by, among others, the Danish-born priest J. N. Wilse, who ranked Christiania as the place where the best Danish was spoken, in terms of the spoken form's proximity to the written language.¹⁵ Einar Haugen compares such language attitudes in Scandinavia with the notion once prevalent in Italy that the most sought-after spoken form of the language was '*lingua toscana in bocca romana*' (the Tuscan language as spoken by an inhabitant of Rome – see 3.6 above), and with the idea that Hanover is where the 'best'

¹³ Ingrid Markussen, 'The Role of Schools and Education from the 16th to the End of the 18th Century', trans. by Allan Karker, in *The Nordic Languages: An International Handbook of the History of the North Germanic Languages*, ed. by Oskar Bandle and others, 2 vols (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2002-2005), II (2005), pp. 1369-1379 (p. 1375).

¹⁴ Olaf Almenningen and Åsmund Lien, *Striden for nynorsk bruksmål: Ei lita målreisingssoqe* (Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget, 1978), p. 11.

¹⁵ Indrebø, p. 300.

German is spoken, not Berlin.¹⁶ This is not dissimilar from the common belief, as expressed by Samuel Johnson, that the English spoken in Inverness is 'peculiarly elegant'.¹⁷ This attitude may be partly due to a relatively weaker Scots substratum there than in other cities in Scotland.¹⁸

Haugen gives the following overview of the types of spoken language that were in use in Norway by the early 1800s:

(1) *Pure Danish*, used by a small number of immigrated Danish officials and merchants, and on the stage, which was dominated by Danish actors; (2) *Literary Standard*, a Norwegian reading pronunciation of Danish used on solemn occasions by Norwegian-born pastors and officials, in its most exaggerated form by country schoolmasters when instructing the young; (3) *Colloquial Standard*, the daily speech of the educated classes, a compromise between the preceding and the following types, varying in style according to the occasion and the speaker's origin; (4) *Urban Substandard*, spoken by artisans and working-class people, varying from city to city, but showing many characteristics in common with the surrounding rural dialects; (5) *Rural Dialect*, spoken by the farming and fishing population, varying from parish to parish, with an intricate network of isoglosses crisscrossing the country, but falling into broad dialectal areas determined by the lines of communication.¹⁹

As shall be seen, it would be difficult for any future attempt to create a written standard of Norwegian to reach a solution that could take into account and reconcile all these sociolects.

¹⁶ Einar Haugen, *The Scandinavian Languages: An Introduction to their History* (London: Faber and Faber, 1976), p. 407.

¹⁷ Samuel Johnson, *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland* (London: printed for W. Strahan and T. Cadell, 1775), p. 54.

¹⁸ J. C. Wells, *Accents of English 2: The British Isles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 395.

¹⁹ Einar Haugen, *Language Conflict and Language Planning: The Case of Modern Norwegian* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966), pp. 31-32.

5.3 Union with Sweden and National Romanticism

The Norwegian language debate stems from the solutions proposed to resolve the post-1814 political and linguistic situation of Norway. In 1814, having been a part of the losing coalition in the Napoleonic Wars, Denmark was obliged to cede rule of Norway to Sweden. A Norwegian constitution was signed in May that year in an attempt to assert Norwegian independence. Following a short conflict with Sweden, the Constitution was amended in November, and Norway entered into a union with Sweden. The Constitution was – and currently still is – written in Danish, although there is evidence that those who wrote it would have called the language they wrote Norwegian. References were included in the amended version to laws and official documents being written in '*det Norske Sprag*' ('the Norwegian language') (in articles 33 and 81), but these were most probably intended to specify that the language should not be Swedish, rather than advocating a Norwegian language separate from Danish. Article 47 also stipulated that princes who acceded to the throne while still minors should be given instruction in Norwegian language.

The events of 1814 set the stage for Norwegian nationalism, which was encouraged by the degree of autonomy that Sweden allowed Norway. In political terms, this nationalism was not necessarily anti-Danish. There was perhaps a stronger element of political anti-Swedishness, as many Norwegians had developed prejudice towards Sweden during the Danish period.²⁰ Language soon came to play a much more central role in Norwegian nationalism, as the ideology of National Romanticism gained influence. The Romantic movement had already arrived in Denmark and Sweden in the early years of the nineteenth century and, at the same time as it was taking hold in Norway, it was also having an impact

²⁰ Arne Torp and Lars S. Vikør, *Hovuddrag i norsk språkhistorie* ([Oslo]: Ad Notam Gyldendal, 1993), p. 137.

among Finnish, Icelandic and Faroese intellectuals. Two main, paradoxical Romantic currents would appear in Scandinavia: individual Danish, Norwegian and Swedish nationalisms and a pan-Nordic nationalism, or Scandinavianism, which saw Denmark, Norway and Sweden as one nation.²¹ Since Norway had no recent history as a separate state, Norwegian nationalism in the 1800s was more antagonistic towards its neighbouring states than Danish or Swedish nationalisms were.²²

A key feature of National Romanticism is the importance assigned to the link between language and nation. According to the movement, in order for a nation to be deemed worthy of nationhood, it was almost a precondition that it must have its own language. Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803) is generally credited with having introduced this idea in the eighteenth century, although he is often seen as a 'pre-Romantic'.²³ The emphasis that National Romanticism placed on language as a qualification for national status led to language achieving substantial significance in many parts of Europe at a time of prolific nation-building.

Although Romanticism was, in part, a critical reaction to many of the ideals of Enlightenment thinkers, the two currents met in Norway and were combined, for example in the writings of Henrik Wergeland (1808-1845).²⁴ Wergeland was an eminent poet, but also a political agitator. Walton suggests that there are two forms of Romanticism:

²¹ Odd Monsson, 'Nationalism and Scandinavism in the Development of the Nordic Languages in the 19th Century', trans. by J. Peter Burgess, in *The Nordic Languages: An International Handbook of the History of the North Germanic Languages*, ed. by Oskar Bandle and others, 2 vols (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2002-2005), II (2005), pp. 1453-1468 (p. 1453).

²² Ibid., p. 1459.

²³ Karen Risager, *Language and Culture: Global Flows and Local Complexity* (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 2006), p. 60.

²⁴ Grepstad, *Viljen til språk*, p. 48.

It is possible to conceive of Romanticism having a 'left' and a 'right' variety, where 'left' Romanticism [...] is concerned with notions of freedom and advance for mankind, whilst 'right' Romanticism represents the reaction of an older élite against a rising liberal bourgeoisie, and is more pronouncedly archaic and nostalgic.²⁵

With specific reference to the treatment of the peasantry in Romantic works, Walton claims that, in spite of Wergeland, it is the 'right' variety that dominated in Norway although, '[i]f only because of Wergeland, the qualitative achievement of the left was greater'.²⁶ In the early 1830s, Wergeland wrote proposals for the development of a written standard of Norwegian which would feature a Norwegianised spelling system. The incorporation in the written language of words from spoken Norwegian demonstrates Wergeland's particular interest in increasing respect for popular culture, and is typical of left-Romantic ideals. Walton puts forward that the desire merely to modify the existing language shows that Wergeland intended to maintain his 'umbilical attachment to a cultural hegemony, despite his oppositional rôle within it'.²⁷ Nevertheless, Wergeland's hybrid of Romanticism and Enlightenment ideas would to some extent be revisited by Knud Knudsen and Ivar Aasen, as will be seen below.

Wergeland had a group of young student supporters, who were known as '*Norskhedspartiet*' ('The Norwegianness Party'), but he also had opponents in '*Intelligentspartiet*' ('The Party of the Intelligentsia'), which looked towards another poet, Johan Sebastian Welhaven (1807-1873). While Wergeland's supporters wished to see the rural populace as the bearers of an unbroken Norwegian cultural, historical and linguistic tradition, Welhaven's followers preferred to see Norway as the nation that had only existed

²⁵ Walton, *Farewell the Spirit Craven*, p. 30.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 49-51.

since 1814. They believed that the upper classes had freed Norway from Danish rule, and that it was the written language used by these people that should be the national language. Although their ideal option would be a language identical to that used in Denmark, Welhaven was willing to accept some Norwegianisms in literary writing, using them himself on occasion.²⁸

Another solution was put forward by the historian Peter Andreas Munch (1810-1863). Unlike Wergeland, he did not believe that a unique language was an essential component of nationhood.²⁹ If, however, there were to be a separate Norwegian written language, he recommended basing such a standard on one representative dialect with etymological principles.³⁰

5.4 Ivar Aasen's counter-hegemonic project

In the history of Norwegian language planning, the two most renowned figures are Ivar Aasen (1813-1896) and Knud Knudsen (1812-1895). The principal feature they shared, together with Wergeland, was a strong desire for popular education and enlightenment.³¹ The linguistic means they proposed to achieve this aim were, however, quite different, and it is the written standards that arose from their efforts, and the world-views implied by each of them, that have been at the centre of the Norwegian language struggle ever since.

²⁸ Torp and Vikør, pp. 141-142.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 143.

³⁰ Tove Bull, 'Special Linguistic Developments in 19th-Century Norway', in *The Nordic Languages: An International Handbook of the History of the North Germanic Languages*, ed. by Oskar Bandle and others, 2 vols (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2002-2005), II (2005), pp. 1468-1475 (p. 1470).

³¹ Dag Gundersen, *Fra Wergeland til Vogt-komiteen: Et utvalg av hovedtrekk og detaljer fra norsk språknormering* ([Oslo]: Universitetsforlaget, 1967), p. 27.

Ivar Aasen was born into a family of smallholders in Ørsta, in the west of Norway. Although Ørsta is in a peripheral location, a neighbouring farm had a printing house, which was only the fifth printing house in Norway.³² The owner of the press, Sivert Aarflot, had already opened a free lending library, and he also established one of the first newspapers in Norway, *Norsk Landboeblad*. Perhaps encouraged by the local intellectual environment, Aasen developed an early interest in grammar, as well as in botany, and he read Wergeland's and P. A. Munch's contributions to the language debate.³³

In 1836, he devised his own solution to the language situation in 'Om vort Skriftsprog' ('On our Written Language'). This was primarily a research plan for his own use and was only published posthumously in 1909.

Forslag. Det er ikke min Hensigt hermed at fremhæve nogen enkelt af vore Dialekter; nei, ingen saadan bør være Hovedsprog, men dette skulde være en Sammenligning af, et Grundlag for dem Alle. Til et saadant at fuldføre, skulde der gøres Ordsamlinger for enhver af Landets større Provindser, med grammatikalske Oplysninger og bestemte Ordforklaringer. Til at forfatte disse, skulde Mænd, som ei blot troede at kunne, men og virkelig kunde Almugesproget, opmuntres.³⁴

Proposal. It is not my intention here to draw attention to any specific one of our dialects; no, nothing like that should be our main language, which should instead be a composite of and a foundation for all of them. In order to realise something like this, collections of words should be made in each of our country's larger provinces, with grammatical information and explanations of certain words. To compose these, people should be encouraged who do not only believe that they know the everyday language, but who also really do know it.

³² Grepstad, *Viljen til språk*, p. 53.

³³ Torp and Vikør, p. 147.

³⁴ Ivar Aasen, 'Om vort Skriftsprog', *Syn og segn*, 15 (1909), 1-5; repr. in *Om norsk språkhistorie*, ed. by Eskil Hanssen (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, [1970]), pp.218-222 (pp. 221-222).

In this short plan, Aasen had set out the basic foundations for what would become the Nynorsk project. In 1806, Gregers Fougner Lundh had already suggested that the dialects of Norway could act as the basis for a new language.³⁵ As has been discussed above, P. A. Munch also envisaged the possibility of a new written norm based on one specific dialect. Aasen went further than Munch, deciding to base his norm on features common to all Norwegian dialects, as far as possible.

Aasen was conscious that such a reform could be accused of creating a language that was unrefined, but he defended the spontaneous, subaltern grammar of dialects:

At vi, ved den her tilsigtede Reform eller Tillæmpning, skulde faa et altfor plat og pøbelagtigt Hovedsprog, er en Indvending, der kun grunder sig paa Fordom og Vane. [...] Og hvorfor skulde vi være saa ængstelige for disse saakaldte Platheder? De ere det ikke; de ere Norskheder. Lad os sætte Fordommene tilside, og ikke undsee os for at bruge vort Lands eget Tungemaal.³⁶

The objection that, through this intended reform or adaption, we might get a far too vulgar and plebeian main language is only based on prejudice and custom. [...] And why should we be so worried about these so-called vulgarities? They are not vulgarities; they are Norwegianisms. Let us set aside these prejudices and not be ashamed to use our country's own tongue.

Aasen set about writing a grammar of the dialect of his own region, Sunnmøre, and in 1842 he was awarded funds to travel through western Norway, and then the rest of the country, to study Norwegian dialects. An important influence for Aasen was the Danish linguist Rasmus Rask (1787-1832) whose rural origins, like Aasen's, also feature heavily in his popular image and received biography.³⁷ Rask's studies had shown genealogical

³⁵ Grepstad, *Viljen til språk*, p. 57.

³⁶ Aasen, 'Om vort Skriftsprog', p. 221.

³⁷ Andrew Robert Linn, *Constructing the Grammars of a Language: Ivar Aasen and Nineteenth Century Norwegian Linguistics* (Münster: Nodus Publikationen, 1997), p. 66.

relationships between languages, and Aasen used this reasoning to show the shared origin of Norwegian dialects, which he believed would show that they could be reunified under one written standard.³⁸

In 1848, Aasen published a grammar, which he referred to as *det norske Folkesprog* ('the Norwegian folk language', or 'the language of the Norwegian people'). A dictionary followed in 1850, and then a book of samples in 1853, in which he called the language '*Landsmaal*'. This name, now spelt *landsmål* – and no longer capitalised since the comprehensive capitalisation of Norwegian nouns was officially discontinued in 1877 – could mean either 'language of the countryside' or 'language of the country (i.e. nation)'. It seems this ambiguity was intentional.³⁹ The language was later renamed *nynorsk* (often known in English as New Norwegian or New Norse, but here 'Landsmål' and 'Nynorsk' will be used, capitalised according to English practice, depending on the period in question).

By often preferring archaic forms of words and looking towards Old Norse, Aasen may have furthered the efforts of the Norwegian Historical School. This group of historians had endeavoured to demonstrate 'that the Norwegian people were equally venerable and in a sense more so than their Nordic neighbours', largely by attempting to show that the ethnic origins of Scandinavians were to be found in what is now Norway, making Norwegians 'more pure' and 'more noble'.⁴⁰ As Walton notes, allegations regarding Aasen's antiquarianism have been central in many critiques of his work as a National Romantic project.⁴¹ His standard has been further criticised by some for being under-representative of eastern Norwegian dialects. Many of the assumptions about Aasen's preferences for archaic

³⁸ Stephen J. Walton, *Ivar Aasens kropp* (Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget, 1996), pp. 310-311.

³⁹ Haugen, *Language Conflict and Language Planning*, p. 34.

⁴⁰ Monsson, p. 1459.

⁴¹ Walton, *Farewell the Spirit Craven*, p. 162.

or western-Norwegian forms are, however, related to changes in the demographic structure of Norway since Aasen's work was finished.⁴²

Although the Nynorsk project may initially seem a clear example of National Romantic language planning, Walton argues that Aasen was by no means a committed nationalist. Aasen was not especially enamoured with nationalist theorists. He kept a distance from two institutions that Walton sees as deeply involved in nation-building – universities and the novel – and he does not seem to have been at all fond of systems of inclusion or exclusion, as are so often encouraged in nation-building.⁴³ Walton argues that the key area of cohesion between National Romanticism and Aasen's life-work is the prominence of the peasantry as a motif and theme.⁴⁴ Although Aasen treats the peasantry as a theme, both in his literary production and in his linguistic project, he does not treat this theme in the same way as most National Romantics did, that is to say the 'right' National Romantics (see 5.3 above). It may be more accurate, some have argued, to see Aasen as a proponent of Enlightenment ideas.⁴⁵ As was the case with Wergeland, Enlightenment ideas again appeared in Norway dressed up as Romanticism.⁴⁶

Aasen's project can be interpreted as an attempt to create an integral hegemony, in which there would be an organic link between the people and their written language. Aasen's counter-hegemonic stance against Danish was clear, as he believed Danish '*hever her ingen Rett utan den, som Magt og Tvang elder Ovrike kunde giva det; og den Retten varer inkje*

⁴² Ibid., p. 174.

⁴³ Ibid., pp. 258-259.

⁴⁴ Walton, *Farewell the Spirit Craven*, p. 3.

⁴⁵ Kristian Ihle Hanto, *Ideologiar i norsk målreising* (Oslo: Novus forlag, 1986), p. 19.

⁴⁶ Øystein Sørensen, *Kampen om Norges sjel: 1770-1905*, Norsk idéhistorie, 3 (Oslo: Aschehoug, 2001), pp. 20-21.

*lenger, en medan Magti varer*⁴⁷ ('had no right [in Norway], except that which power and force or domination could give it; and that right lasts no longer than the power lasts'). The social dimension of Aasen's work lies most of all in his ideology for popular enlightenment. He did not prominently advocate what we would now call class struggle.⁴⁸ Although the notion of class consciousness was still in a nascent phase, Aasen did indeed demonstrate have a certain degree of class consciousness and a desire for class cooperation, for instance in his diaries during an important trip to Bergen in 1841.⁴⁹ In later life, his charitable social engagement would be manifested in financial terms, with the vast accumulative sum he donated to beggars in Christiania.⁵⁰ In being oppositional to the dominant cultural forces in Norway, the counter-hegemony Aasen proposed was not just against the Danish language, but also against the ideological hegemony of National Romanticism.⁵¹

5.5 Riksmål: Towards a new minimal hegemony?

Knud Knudsen was a teacher in Christiania. He preferred a standard based on the language spoken by the educated classes in the towns: '*den dannede Dagligtale*' ('educated everyday speech'). He wished to see spelling changes that would bring the written language closer to the spoken language. This was a programme that had also been aired in Denmark by, for example, Rasmus Rask. The changes that Knudsen wanted were not just minor ones: he envisaged a programme of gradual spelling changes that would Norwegianise the Danish written language, and he wished to eliminate as many foreign words as possible. He called

⁴⁷ Ivar Aasen, 'Minningar fraa Maalstriden. Tredje Røda', *Dølen*, 13 March 1859, 1-2 (p. 1).

⁴⁸ Hanto, p. 25.

⁴⁹ Walton, *Ivar Aasens kropp*, pp. 38-42.

⁵⁰ Grepstad, *Viljen til språk*, p. 75.

⁵¹ Stephen J. Walton, 'Ivar Aasen – klassereisar eller målreisar?', *Eigenproduksjon*, 43 (1991), 1-22 (p. 20).

this language '*dansk-norsk*' ('Dano-Norwegian'). With this term, he made it clear that his project was in between Aasen's and that of the '*Danomaner*' ('Danomanians'), such as Welhaven, who wished to maintain the Danish language in its original form.⁵²

Knudsen was also a strong supporter of attempts to reform the written Scandinavian languages so that they might converge. He attended a meeting held in Stockholm in 1869 to decide on the first orthographical changes that would be required in each of the languages to move in this direction, although Danish and Norwegian (or Danish-Norwegian) were considered just one standard, and Landsmål was not taken into account. Henrik Ibsen and Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson made use of the new Danish-Norwegian orthographic conventions decided in Stockholm, but the norm was not as consistent as Landsmål, and later language reforms in Norway paid little attention to harmonisation with Danish or Swedish.⁵³ The difficulties that linguistic Scandinavianism has faced are, however, mostly related to the decline of political and cultural Scandinavianism more generally, and to the threat that Scandinavianism could have posed to the various Norwegianisation projects.⁵⁴

There were now three alternative solutions to the Norwegian language question: the traditionalist view that the Danish written language was already Norwegian and no changes were necessary, the reformist programme of Knud Knudsen, based on the colloquial language, and the radical solution of Ivar Aasen. The breakthrough for Knudsen's standard would come in 1899, when the writer Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson (1832-1910) publicly declared his support for '*Kultursproget*' ('the language of culture') or, as he also called it, '*Rigsmål*' ('the national language' or 'the official language').⁵⁵ Now spelt *riksmål*, and like *landsmål* or

⁵² Torp and Vikør, pp. 188-189.

⁵³ Monsson, pp. 1465-1466.

⁵⁴ Ibid., pp. 1460-1461.

⁵⁵ Haugen, *Language Conflict and Language Planning*, p. 46.

nynorsk, no longer capitalised in Norwegian (see 5.4 above), this came to be the accepted name for the Danish-based standard, which gradually went through reforms as Knudsen had recommended. The name was later changed to *bokmål* (sometimes known in English as ‘the book language’, but here the terms ‘Riksmål’ and ‘Bokmål’ will be used, depending on the period, capitalised according to English practice).

As Vikør notes, Knudsen has been subject to misinterpretation as a representative for the ruling classes, and for having promoted a standard that sought to maintain the status of higher social classes. Such interpretations, he believes, are unjustified, as Knudsen wished to base his language on a particular spoken variety that was actually in oral use, albeit by a comparatively select few. Meanwhile, Aasen based his standard not on one variety, but instead envisaged a standard that was a composite of all Norwegian dialects.⁵⁶ Aasen’s form was a hypernorm with features that can be found in some dialects but not necessarily in all of them. Knudsen’s intention was also to further the democratisation of education and knowledge, and he believed his project would be beneficial to the people. Knudsen met with harsher criticism from the sociocultural establishment than Aasen did at the time.⁵⁷ Whereas Aasen’s solution sought to make a comprehensive, sweeping change, Knudsen preferred a gradual approach. He was critical of Aasen’s approach, but he believed that they did both have the same basic aim.⁵⁸

Nevertheless, the project that would become Bokmål has been criticised by the Nynorsk movement, which has perceived it as a language that seeks to maintain social hierarchies. In hegemonic terms, the initial codification of Bokmål could be interpreted as an

⁵⁶ Vikør, ‘Korfor fekk vi språkstrid’, p. 222.

⁵⁷ Torp and Vikør, pp. 194-195.

⁵⁸ Kjell Haugland and others, ‘Den nasjonale revolusjonen (1814-1905)’, in *Språk og samfunn gjennom tusen år: Ei norsk språkhistorie*, ed. by Olaf Almenningen and others, 6th edn. (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2002), pp. 56-96 (pp. 78-79).

attempt to create a minimal hegemony, that is to say one that only serves an élite, as it is more closely related to the spoken language of the urban upper classes and the dialects of the south-east of Norway, which has traditionally been a centre of power and influence. The 'élite' aspect of Bokmål would change, however, over the twentieth century, largely due to industrialisation, urbanisation and proletarianisation, as shall be seen in the following chapter.

5.6 The rise of Norwegian language activism

The groundwork for the coming proletarianisation was laid in the mid- to late nineteenth century, as more popular organisations were founded in Norway, such as political parties, workers' unions, lay organisations, and the temperance movement. One of the most important movements, and one which has consistently maintained a high profile, is *målrørsla* (the [Nynorsk] language movement). The first societies formed as part of this movement were Vestmannalaget (1868), based in Bergen, and Det Norske Samlaget (1868) in Christiania, which would become the main Nynorsk publishing house. The movement therefore began in the demographic and political centres of Norway before spreading to the peripheries that later would become the core areas for Nynorsk.

A number of Landsmål newspapers were also founded, including *Fedraheimen* (1877-1891). The editor of this paper was one of the most crucial supporters of Ivar Aasen's project, Arne Garborg (1851-1924). Among other endeavours, he also wrote the first major novel in Landsmål, *Bondestudentar* (1883), but above all he was a determined polemicist, as demonstrated in *Den ny-norske Sprog- og Nationalitetsbevægelse* (1877), a collection of '*polemiske Sendebreve*' ('polemical letters') purposefully not written in Landsmål so as to address the opponents of the movement directly. Although the language was at that time not yet generally known as Nynorsk, it is appropriate in this instance to refer to the Nynorsk

movement, as Garborg himself used the term '*ny-norsk*'. Garborg set out the basis for the Nynorsk movement's oppositional spirit, which reflected his own counter-hegemonic sensitivities. As Garborg saw it, a desire for dialogue and dialectic were essential parts of the Nynorsk movement's programme:

Det at møde Modstand, naar man arbejder for en ny Ide, er i og for sig hverken ubehageligt eller skadeligt. Det inciterer Tanken, anspænder Viljen og virker forhøiende paa hele den aandelige Vitalitet.⁵⁹

To encounter opposition when one is working towards a new idea, is in itself neither unpleasant nor detrimental. It stimulates thought, concentrates the will and has the effect of enhancing all of one's intellectual vitality.

As will be seen in the following chapter, Nynorsk activists today still place great importance on the concept of dialectical opposition. Garborg went on to express his ambitions for his opponents to improve the standard of their argumentation to provide an opposition '*som kan være Kampen værdt*' ('that can be worth the fight').⁶⁰

Garborg developed the idea that Norway was currently two nations, and he pointed out the irony in this as well as its implications for the idea of a unified Norwegian identity:

Mine Herrer! Nu spørger De med en vis overlegen Ironi:

'Maalstræverne har hidtil paastaaet, at det var to Nationer her i Landet, – og nu er det ingen?'

Ganske rigtigt. At det er 'to Nationer' i et Samfund, der dog gjør Krav paa at være ét, vil jo sige, at det egentlig er ingen.⁶¹

Gentlemen! Now you ask with a certain superior irony:

⁵⁹ Arne Garborg, *Den ny-norske Sprog- og Nationalitetsbevægelse: Et Forsøg paa en omfattende Redegjørelse, formet som polemiske Sendebreve til Modstræverne* (Kristiania: Cammermeyer, 1877), p. 5.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

‘The language activists have so far claimed that there were two nations in this country, – and now there are none?’

Quite right. That there are ‘two nations’ in a society that still lays claim to being one, does indeed mean that there really is none.

Inspired by the idea that the nation can be defined by language, some members of the Nynorsk movement, such as Garborg, considered those who continued to use Dano-Norwegian – or Norwegian-Danish – to be less Norwegian, as their language was perceived to be not Norwegian at all. Garborg argued that if the US diplomat and philologist George Perkins Marsh saw language as ‘the vehicle of the expression of the national mind and character’, then Marsh had to see himself and his fellow US citizens as English.⁶² Rather than uniting the nation, the Norwegian language question served to split the nation:

Og nu det, der i andre Nationer pleier at være det fuldt ud fælles Almene, det, som under enhver Omstændighed er Alles Eie, Nationens aandelige Flag og Mærke baade indadtil og udadtil, – *Sproget* – ja se det er hos os det allerømfindtligste Stridspunkt. Det er ikke Nationalitetens, men netop National-*Splidens* Schibolet [...].⁶³

And now that which in other countries is usually the fully common universal, that which in any circumstances is in the ownership of everyone, the nation’s spiritual flag and emblem both inwardly and outwardly, – *the language* – well, you see in our case it is the most sensitive of all disputes. It is not the shibboleth of nationality, but rather that of national division [...].

The historian Ernst Sars (1835-1917) later also outlined the existence of what he considered two cultures in Norway: the Danish élite culture and a more authentically Norwegian peasant culture. Unlike Garborg, who believed that the élite culture or nationality should be contested, Sars viewed each of these cultures as occupying their own

⁶² Ibid., p. 109.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 103.

niche in the overall national culture, with their own role to play. He advocated minimising conflicts between the two cultures and achieving greater synthesis between them.⁶⁴ One way he proposed to reduce the gap was through greater integration between the two languages.⁶⁵

In a concession to his opponents, Garborg did offer to consider urban dwellers as Norwegians, but only in a geographical and political sense, not a national sense.⁶⁶ The bipartition of Norwegian society and culture is reminiscent of Gramsci's analysis of the historic cultural split in Italian society, with a cosmopolitan élite high culture disconnected from the masses and from folk culture (see 3.2 above). The split that Garborg described is indeed also an alternative reading of the very same cultural cleavages that Rokkan identified (see 2.3.2 above); one between centre and periphery and between hegemon and subaltern. As Garborg saw it, the split was between an originally Danish urban ruling class, maintaining its hegemony by linguistic means, and the rural classes, who had greater right to label themselves as Norwegian.⁶⁷ He thus portrayed cities in stark contrast to rural settlements.

Having been set up in the cities, the Nynorsk movement did later attempt to create new spaces where Landsmål could exist in an urban context. One such example are the *kaffistover*, 130 of which opened during the twentieth century, with some still to be found today.⁶⁸ These are cafés or restaurants that use Nynorsk as an integral part of their operations, for example on signs and menus (see figure 5.1 below). As they are owned by local *mållag* ([Nynorsk] language associations) or rural associations, they also make a financial contribution to the Nynorsk cause.

⁶⁴ Sørensen, *Kampen om Norges sjel*, p. 324.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 407.

⁶⁶ Garborg, p. 118.

⁶⁷ Hanto, pp. 42-43.

⁶⁸ Grepstad, *Viljen til språk*, p. 146.

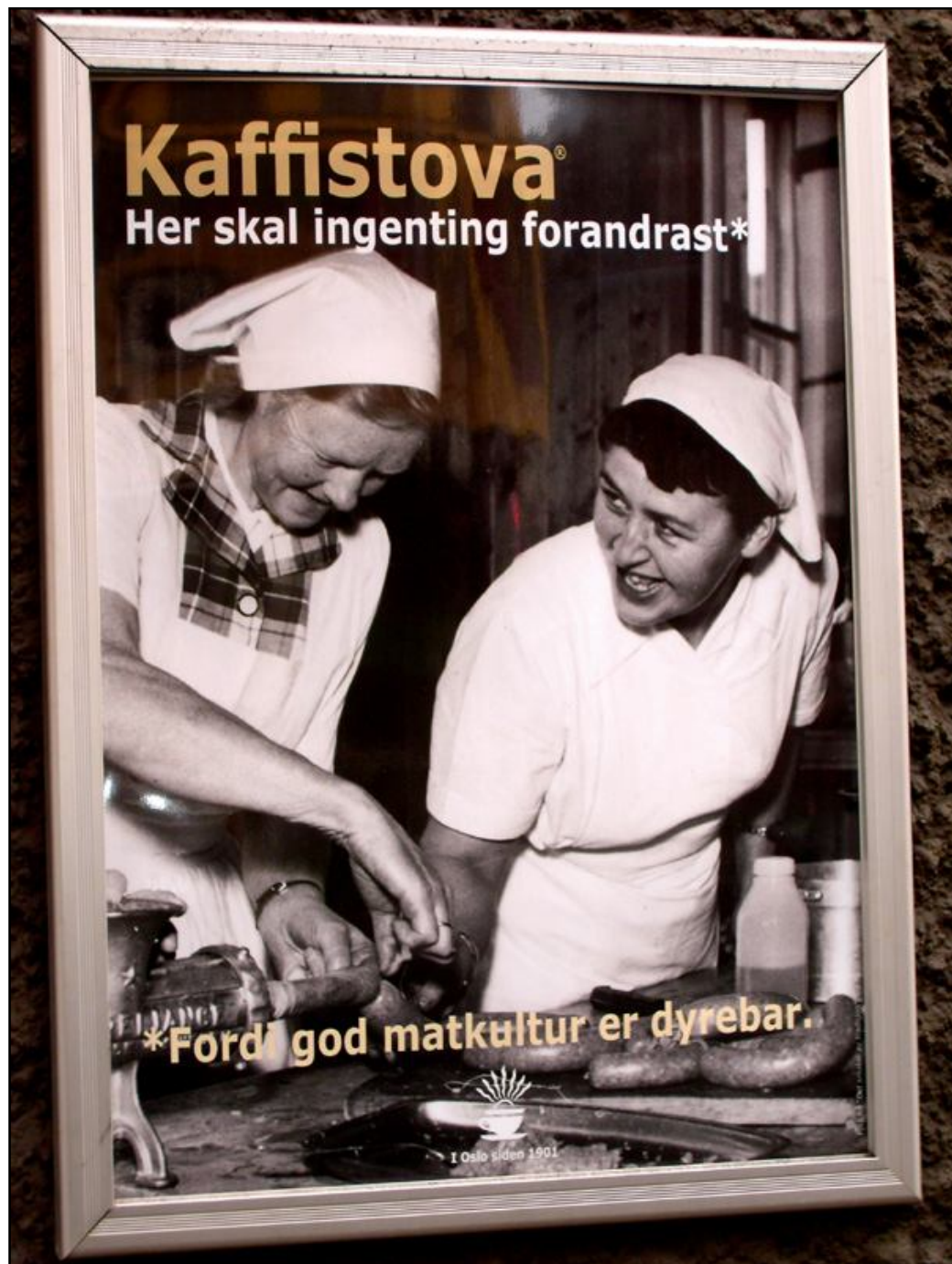


Figure 5.1 An important visual presence in the capital for the counter-hegemonic written standard: a poster entirely in Nynorsk outside the Nynorsk-affiliated Kaffistova café in Oslo. The text at the top reads 'Kaffistova / We are not changing anything here*', while the asterisked text towards the bottom reads '* Because good culinary culture is priceless'. Below the small white Kaffistova logo at the bottom is the legend 'In Oslo since 1901'. Photograph by the author, April 2007.

Kaffistovene were primarily intended to provide a welcoming place for rural visitors or newcomers to the city to enjoy non-alcoholic refreshment, but they also had a powerful effect on urbanites. The visibility of this new language, isolated in the urban linguistic landscape (see 1.6 above), was a potent symbol of the cultural hegemony of the other, dominant language.⁶⁹ At least within the cities, Landsmål was clearly a minority language.

5.7 Official recognition of Landsmål

Landsmål soon made progress in the school system. In 1863, Peter Andreas Jensen published a compendium for use in schools, *Lesebog for Folkeskolen og Folkehjemmet*, which soon became the standard text in language teaching. The book included a number of texts in dialect and in Landsmål, with an introduction penned by Aasen himself. The widespread use of this book meant that, less than two decades after the publication of Aasen's grammar, most pupils now encountered some Landsmål at school.⁷⁰ Over the 1870s, many cultural figures and educators as well as liberal politicians began to appreciate the pedagogical benefits of allowing school pupils to be taught in and to use their native spoken language, that is to say their own dialect.⁷¹ As a result, the government instructed in the 1879 school curriculum that teaching should take place, as far as possible, in the pupils' own dialect, although pupils would also be expected to be able to read and write standard written language. This principle still applies in Norwegian school education today, although pupils must now learn both written standards of Norwegian. The interpretation of these guidelines would later come up for discussion again in the early 1900s (see 5.8 below). In higher education, Marius Hægstad was appointed the first professor of Landsmål in 1899. The chair had previously

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 142.

⁷⁰ Ibid., pp. 94-95.

⁷¹ Torp and Vikør, pp. 264-265.

been offered to Ivar Aasen, but he declined the offer. This has generally been portrayed within the mythology of the Nynorsk movement as a typical example of Aasen's modesty, but it is also possible that Aasen foresaw the problems that the next candidate, Hans Ross, faced when his recommendation for the post in 1881 fell through.⁷²

Parliamentarism was introduced in Norway in 1884, and the same year saw the founding of the two oldest political parties: Venstre (the Liberal Party, literally 'Left') and Høire (the Conservative Party, now spelt Høyre in Bokmål or Høgre in Nynorsk, literally 'Right'; the modern Nynorsk name will be used here). Venstre proposed in 1885 that Landsmål should be made a co-official language with what would later become Bokmål. The motion was passed, with seventy-eight members of the Storting voting for the proposal and thirty-one against: the thirty Høgre members and one member of Venstre. This democratically sanctioned motion has since been used by the Nynorsk movement to support later claims.⁷³

The fact that Venstre was so sympathetic towards Landsmål can partially be explained by the membership in the party of many Landsmål supporters, but the party's programme was also broadly similar to the Landsmål movement in its opposition to the status quo.⁷⁴ Venstre was founded as a criticism of the clique of *embetsmenn* (civil service bureaucrats) ruling the country, and in particular in order to promote the idea of parliamentarism, which Høgre was against. Furthermore, Landsmål activists lobbied Venstre enthusiastically. In one particular pamphlet distributed by Det Norske Samlaget to political groups and teachers' unions in 1884, a clear appeal is made to National Romantic sensibilities to justify the wider

⁷² Walton, *Ivar Aasens kropp*, pp. 607-608.

⁷³ Kåre Lilleholt, 'Nynorsk i offentlig målbruk', in *Målreising i 75 år: Noregs Mållag 1906-1981*, ed. by Olaf Almenningen and others (Oslo: Fonna forlag, 1981), pp. 383-407 (p. 385).

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 384.

use of Landsmål. In order that the Norwegian smallholder may '*indtage den Høisædesplads i vort Samfund, som Forfatningen har anvist ham*' ('assume the place of honour in our society that the Constitution has assigned him'), he must achieve for his language '*en så almindelig Anerkjendelse og Anseelse, at han trygt og frit kan bruge det overalt, hvor han skal optræde*' ('such universal recognition and esteem that he can confidently and freely use it wherever he may happen to be').⁷⁵

Another current that first arose towards the end of the 1800s strove for a future single written standard of Norwegian based on the two established standards. This hypothetical standard was called *samnorsk* (sometimes known in English as Common Norwegian, but here the term Samnorsk will be used). The first high profile exponent of the Samnorsk movement was Professor Moltke Moe (1859-1913). Moe's father Jørgen (1813-1882) had, together with his associate Peter Christen Asbjørnsen (1812-1885), collected Norwegian folk tales, which they reproduced in *Norske Folkeeventyr* (*Norwegian Folktales*) between 1841 and 1844. Moltke Moe inherited the task of updating later editions of the tales in order to keep their style up to date with developments in the Norwegian language.⁷⁶ Picking up the conciliatory strand of Ernst Sars' thought on the cultural cleavage in Norway between centre and periphery, or town and country, Moe suggested that the two language standards, which he called '*bynorsk*' ('urban Norwegian') and '*landsnorsk*' ('rural Norwegian') could be unified.

Begge strømmer er like berettigede, like nødvendige. Ingen av dem kan stige frem og si: '*Jeg er det norske folk, jeg alene*'. [...] Vor sproglige tvedelthet er en historisk nødvendighet – baade nu og

⁷⁵ Det Norske Samlaget, 'Flygeskrift' (1884); repr. in *Målpolitiske dokument 1864-1885: Ei folkerørsle blir til*, ed. by Kjell Haugland (Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget, 1971), pp. 182-192 (p. 188).

⁷⁶ Haugland and others, p. 66.

længe fremefter. Den maa nationen vokse av sig, litt efter litt, ved at nærme sig det fælles maal mer og mer fra begge sider.⁷⁷

Both currents are equally justified, equally necessary. Neither of them can step forward and say: 'I alone am the Norwegian people'. [...] Our linguistic bipartition is a historical necessity – both now and for long into the future. The nation must *outgrow* it, little by little, by approaching ever closer from both sides to the common language.

The conciliatory path would later be taken up again (see 5.9 below) as government policy. Aasen's own preference for language management, as stated in his early programme, had however been to encourage free choice between Danish and what would become Nynorsk.

Denne nye Sprogform skulde dog aldeles ikke paabydes eller paanødes; man skulde opmuntre til dens Brug, men allers lade Enhver bruge det Nye eller Gamle efter eget Godtbefindende.⁷⁸

Nevertheless, this new language form should absolutely not be required or forced upon people; its use should be encouraged, but otherwise everyone should be left to use the new or the old language according to their own good judgment.

This would appear to be closer to present-day official policy, as will be seen in Chapter 6, although the balance between Bokmål and Nynorsk is asymmetrical, like all bilingual situations, in spite of what the official line may be on language equality. Significantly, *de facto* language attitudes do not always reflect the non-discriminatory basis to official policy.

⁷⁷ Moltke Moe, 'Nationalitet og kultur', *Samtiden*, 20 (1909), 17-28; repr. in in *Om norsk språkhistorie*, ed. by Eskil Hanssen (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, [1970]), pp. 263-276 (pp. 273-274).

⁷⁸ Aasen, 'Om vort Skriftsprog', p. 222.

5.8 Language policy in post-1905 Norway

Norway achieved full independence from Sweden in 1905. One year later, the Landsmål movement was consolidated with the founding of Norigs Mållag (later spelt Noregs Mållag, literally the [Landsmål/Nynorsk] Language Association of Norway). This national society and pressure group became the focus for the movement. With Norwegian independence, domestic issues rose in importance, and there was debate in the Landsmål movement as to whether a new political party should be formed to promote the cause of Landsmål. Since the movement was not equally strong in all parts of the country, it was deemed best to try to work with existing parties, of which Venstre was the obvious first choice.⁷⁹

At the activists' meeting of 4 February 1906 that also saw the establishment of Norigs Mållag, it was decided to make a specific political demand for an obligatory exam in Landsmål as part of the *examen artium* that qualified school leavers for university study, and that all candidates for civil service should be tested for their proficiency in Landsmål. The date of this meeting had been chosen carefully, as there was to be a Venstre conference the following day. Venstre agreed to the proposal by Norigs Mållag, whereas Høgre rejected the idea.⁸⁰ Venstre's 1906 election manifesto expressed the desire for '*[f]ortsat arbeide for reisningen af det norske maal, bl. a. ved, at den ene skriftlige prøve til artium blir paa landsmaal*' ('continued work to promote the Norwegian language, including by conducting one of the written exams in the *examen artium* in Landsmål').⁸¹ Venstre went on to win that year's election and in 1907 succeeded in introducing what would become known as *sidemålsstilen*

⁷⁹ Olaf Almenningen, 'Noregs Mållag 1906-1913', in *Målreising i 75 år: Noregs Mållag 1906-1981*, ed. by Olaf Almenningen and others (Oslo: Fonna forlag, 1981), pp. 45-75 (p. 47).

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 61.

⁸¹ Cited in Ottar Grepstad, *På parti med språket? Språkpolitikk i norske partiprogram 1906-2013*, Småskrifter frå Ivar Aasen-tunet, 5 (Ørsta: Nynorsk kultursentrum, 2009), p. 115.

(the secondary language essay). Together with Nynorsk's co-official status, *sidemålsstilen* remains one of the most important and controversial measures for the language.

For Riksmål, 1907 was the year that saw the language make a clear break with Danish spelling. Planning for a fairly radical official spelling reform to Norwegianise Riksmål had begun before the end of the 1800s, and these suggestions were the subject of much debate in the press, with a lot of support to be found in education, and with Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson among the opponents wishing to uphold linguistic ties with Denmark. Post-1905, the new national climate was much more inclined to accept a reform, although the changes eventually put through were more moderate in nature than some had advocated, such as Moltke Moe, Jakob Aars and Simon Wright Hofgaard.⁸² The kinds of spelling changes made to Riksmål in the 1907 reform were consistent with upper-class speech, and this helped to ensure a fairly rapid uptake of the new standard.⁸³ Perhaps the most significant change was phonological, with the introduction of hard consonants *p*, *t* and *k* in place of *b*, *d* and *g* in words such as *dyp* (deep), *ut* (out) and *bak* (behind). These post-vocalic hard consonants, which had disappeared from Danish speech and orthography, had remained in oral use among most Norwegians, including when reading Danish aloud.

Some disagreement arose between the Riksmål and Landsmål movements at the beginning of the twentieth century regarding the principle that school pupils were to be taught in their own spoken language, which had been established in the 1879 school curriculum. The controversy mainly concerned urban schools, as school boards in Bergen, Trondheim and Kristiansund had decided that teaching would take place in spoken Riksmål. Many in the Riksmål movement believed that Riksmål was the natural language of

⁸² Haugen, *Language Conflict and Language Planning*, pp. 52-54.

⁸³ Torp and Vikør, pp. 241-242.

urban Norway, and that the vernacular '*gatesprog*' ('street language') spoken by the majority of the urban population derived from Riksmål. A growing number of those who backed the Landsmål movement, however, saw most forms of urban speech as dialects that had every right to be considered Norwegian, sharing many features with Landsmål instead of Danish or conservative Riksmål.⁸⁴ One article demonstrated, for example, that the dialect of Kristiansund has, in common with most Norwegian dialects, three genders, unlike Danish which lacks the feminine gender, the hard consonants *p*, *t* and *k* in the place of Danish *b*, *d* and *g* in words such as *gap* (gap), *flat* (flat) and *bok* (book), the West Scandinavian diphthongs *ei*, *au* and *øy*, corresponding to the monophthongs *e* and *ø* in Danish, and zero-endings in the indefinite plurals of monosyllabic neuter-gender nouns, such as *to hus* (two houses) instead of the Danish *to huse*.⁸⁵

The parliamentary and media debate concerning this matter came to a head regarding the case of Kristiansund. There, the local branch of Venstre had split into two groups over a number of issues, including language: the Riksmål-inclined group called the other '*mål-venstre*' ('[Lands]mål Venstre'), which in turn called the other group '*øl-venstre*' ('Beer Venstre'), as the Riksmål faction of Venstre in Kristiansund was also against prohibition.⁸⁶ This is one example of an early link between the campaign for Nynorsk and other counter-cultural or counter-hegemonic movements, as alluded to in Rokkan's cultural cleavage model (see 2.3.2 above). Many other similar connections would later be established and continue to be established to this day, including with movements against Norwegian

⁸⁴ Olaf Almenningen, '"Ny arbeidsdag" og mellomkrigstid (1905-1940)', in *Språk og samfunn gjennom tusen år: Ei norsk språkhistorie*, ed. by Olaf Almenningen and others, 6th edn. (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2002), pp. 97-123 (pp. 100-101).

⁸⁵ Idar Handagard, 'Er folkemaale i byarne gode norske maalføre? Fosna-maale. Eit norskt bymaal', *Syn og segn*, 7 (1901), 97-110 (p. 109).

⁸⁶ Ernst Håkon Jahr, *Talemålet i skolen: En studie av drøftinger og bestemmelser om muntlig språkbruk i folkeskolen (fra 1874 til 1925)* (Oslo: Novus forlag, 1984), p. 151.

participation in the European integration process (see 6.5 and 6.8 below). Riksmål supporters from Venstre exerted the most influence in Kristiansund in 1911, when the local school board ruled, under some pressure from the press and the local Riksmål society, that pupils should be taught in spoken Riksmål.⁸⁷ Having resisted compliance with this directive, teacher Knut Grimstad faced threats of dismissal. Although the school board eventually chose no longer to pursue Grimstad's case, the matter received attention in the national press and served to highlight the need for clarification of the principle regarding the spoken language to be used in schools.

Clarification was forthcoming in the new education acts of 1915 and 1917, which specified that pupils were to use their own spoken language, whereas teachers were expected to adjust their natural spoken language according to that of the pupils. This stands in stark contrast to the treatment of spoken languages in education in most countries, including Italy, where most schools teach a very strict grammatical norm. As for the particular circumstances of urban areas, it was clearly expressed during the parliamentary deliberations that the intention was to protect popular urban dialects. The new acts also introduced provisions for local referenda to decide which of the written standards would be used in teaching.⁸⁸

Over the first half century of their existence, Venstre and Høgre spent a great deal of time debating language issues from opposite ends of the struggle, despite some internal splits in Venstre, largely between the rural and urban sections of the party. 1887 had seen the foundation of Det Norske Arbeiderparti (the original Riksmål name of the Norwegian Labour Party, now Arbeiderpartiet/Arbeidarpartiet in modern Bokmål and Nynorsk

⁸⁷ Ibid., pp. 151-161.

⁸⁸ Almenningen, "'Ny arbeidsdag' og mellomkrigstid', pp. 101-102.

respectively; hereafter the modern Nynorsk name will be used). This party mainly stayed away from the conflict between Landsmål and Riksmål until the 1930s, viewing it as a transient debate that could be a distraction from the party's main platform of class struggle and fearing an internal split if the party did get involved. As Arbeidarpartiet member and language activist Halvdan Koht recounts, a typical comment from many in the party on the language struggle in this period was '*Det kann gjøre det same for arbeidaren anten ein skriv "gryten" eller "gryta", når han berre kann få noko i gryta*'⁸⁹ ('It makes little difference to the worker whether one writes "*gryten*" ['the pot', common gender] or "*gryta*" ['the pot', feminine gender], as long as he can get something to put in the pot').

Despite the party's officially neutral stance in the language debate, it did make a gesture related to the question during the general election campaign of 1912, when Riksmålspartiet (the Riksmål Party) appeared on ballot papers in some constituencies. Alfred Eriksen, a member of Arbeidarpartiet who was also chairman of the organisation Riksmålsforbundet (the Riksmål Society), was ejected from the party for encouraging voters to support Riksmålspartiet, although the reason for his expulsion may be that Riksmålspartiet was of a special appeal to supporters of Høgre.⁹⁰ From the 1930s up to the present day, however, Arbeidarpartiet would come to play a much greater role in language policy and in Norwegian politics generally. Nevertheless, Grepstad shows that language issues do not feature as heavily in Arbeidarpartiet's election manifestos as might be expected for a party that has been a key actor in matters of language policy.⁹¹

⁸⁹ Halvdan Koht, 'Arbeidarreising og målspørsmål' (1921); repr. in *Målstrid er klassekamp*, ed. by E. Hanssen and G. Wiggen (Oslo: Pax Forlag, 1973), pp. 25-39 (p. 25).

⁹⁰ Almenningen, '"Ny arbeidsdag" og mellomkrigstid', p. 104.

⁹¹ Grepstad, *På parti med språket?*

5.9 1917-1940: Towards a Samnorsk norm

With further spelling reforms in Riksmål and Landsmål in 1917, the two standards became more flexible. These reforms introduced, for both languages, compulsory changes and optional changes, which then opened for a degree of personal choice in spelling. An individual may, for example, have chosen to use the newly allowed word forms *kasta* (threw) or *stein* (stone) in Riksmål instead of *kastet* and *sten*, which were previously the only spelling variants allowed. It could have been expected that an individual's choice of spelling would often depend on their own local provenance and native pronunciation of the groups of words in question, but their choice may also have depended on how radical or conservative they wished to be in their use of language. In fact, the optional changes to Riksmål were not made wide use of in the period following the reforms, except by those who agreed with the ideology that lay behind.⁹²

The 1917 reform was generally accepted by the Landsmål movement, although there were concerns that the move towards optional spellings of words could lead to Landsmål splitting into different regional languages. The reform helped the Landsmål movement to increase the rate at which the language was spreading through school districts, as it did not seem such a great upheaval to make the move to Landsmål when textbooks would have to be replaced anyway.⁹³ Nevertheless, like the new options in Riksmål, the more modern optional forms introduced into Landsmål were not very widely used in schools or newspapers either, where preferences remained orientated towards the more traditional variants.⁹⁴

⁹² Torp and Vikør, p. 244.

⁹³ Almenningen, "'Ny arbeidsdag" og mellomkrigstid', p. 108.

⁹⁴ Per Ivar Vaagland, *Målrøsla og reformarbeidet i trettiåra* (Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget, 1982), p. 37.

The ideology behind the introduction of optional spelling forms was that the two standards may be brought closer together. Furthermore, it was hoped to democratise Riksmål by introducing elements of lower-class urban dialects and to adapt Landsmål by allowing features of dialects that may have been underrepresented in Aasen's original norm as well as more word forms that reflected modern spoken Norwegian when Landsmål preferred Old Norse-inspired spellings. It was thought that urban dialects could in the future bridge the gap between Landsmål and Riksmål.⁹⁵ These principles were those of the Samnorsk movement, which was currently finding renewed expression through Østlandsk reisning (the Eastern Norwegian Movement), an association that had been formed in 1916 and existed under that name until 1926. Østlandsk reisning was primarily a rural organisation and was particularly interested in raising the prestige of the rural dialects of eastern Norway, but also in adapting the two written standards through the inclusion of linguistic elements of these dialects as a step towards a Samnorsk norm.

It was around this time that the language struggle could first really be characterised as a social struggle rather than mainly a national struggle concerned with linguistic Norwegianisation.⁹⁶ A key figure for this shift was a central member of Østlandsk reisning, the historian Halvdan Koht (1873-1965), who was also active in Noregs Mållag and Arbeidarpartiet, and would later become Norway's foreign minister. Koht was tasked by Arbeidarpartiet with writing a report on the language issue and the labour movement, which was published in 1921. In this document, Koht's view was clearly that '*[s]triden for folkemålet er kultur-sida av arbeidar-reisinga*' ('the struggle for the people's language is the

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 116.

⁹⁶ Torp and Vikør, p. 221.

cultural side of the labour movement').⁹⁷ Through this document, Koht suggested that the workers' movement could benefit from opening to the farmers, especially in the struggle for a national language that would better reflect '*folkemålet*' ('the people's language'). This implied working towards a future Samnorsk norm, although Koht put forward that the codification of an adequate written norm could wait until the workers achieved power. Koht's proposal for co-operation with farmers, which in linguistic terms suggests users of Landsmål, was not without its complications, as many members of the Landsmål movement were involved in other interest groups to which the labour movement was hostile, such as gun clubs, or in associations which may have at least contained certain elements that were opposed to the labour movement, as could be argued in the case of teetotalist organisations.⁹⁸

When Arbeidarpartiet formed its second government in 1935, having previously had less than a month in power in 1928, its success was partly due to the attention it was now paying to language policy. The party had suffered a loss in the 1930 election that could be attributed to the hard-line platform it had adopted. As part of the effort to change the party's course and broaden its appeal, it had now taken on a reformist platform, which included aspiring to form a coalition between workers and small farmers. Koht's proposal for a language policy based on Samnorsk could not have been better suited to this new direction, and it was believed this could act as an important symbol of the labour movement's respect for rural Norway.⁹⁹

Når bøndene merkar at arbeidarane har vyrndnad for åndsarven
deiras, då skal dei lettare skjønne at sosialismen har eit kall til dei

⁹⁷ Koht, p. 39.

⁹⁸ Ernst Håkon Jahr, *Innhogg i nyare norsk språkhistorie* (Oslo: Novus forlag, 1992), p. 78.

⁹⁹ Bucken-Knapp, pp. 71-75.

øg. Ingen kann vente at bonden skal bli sosialist utan han ser seg vinning i det, og i målspørsmålet har vi just eit krav der arbeidarane for si eiga skuld både kann og bør hjelpe bonden.¹⁰⁰

When the farmers notice that the workers have respect for their intellectual heritage, then they will more easily realise that socialism can appeal to them too. Nobody can expect the farmer to become a socialist unless he can see some advantage in it for himself, and in the language question we have precisely a demand in which the workers, for their own sake, both can and should help the farmer.

Gregg Bucken-Knapp argues that the new language policy was a rational choice for Arbeidarpartiet in terms of electoral appeal, as it avoided alienating the party's original supporters while attracting new supporters from rural districts.¹⁰¹ Although Bondepartiet (the Farmers' Party) had been founded in 1920, it had disappointed Noregs Mållag by embracing the Samnorsk ideal rather than fighting for their cause.¹⁰²

The coalition to which Arbeidarpartiet aspired was symbolised particularly in one of the two election films the party made in 1936. While one film, *Vi bygger landet* (We Are Building the Country) was made for an urban audience, the other, *Norge for folket* (Norway for the People) (directed by Helge Lunde) was intended to appeal to a more rural demographic. In one scene, the fishing family at the centre of the film is visited by a cousin from Oslo, who brings a gramophone and record of Arbeidarpartiet's campaign song, also entitled *Norge for folket*, based on Oskar Hansen's 1934 Danish lyrics *Danmark for folket*. After listening to the Bokmål lyrics of the song, the old, bearded grandfather fisherman, who is portrayed as a traditional Venstre voter, exclaims with great pathos in standardised spoken

¹⁰⁰ Koht, p. 38.

¹⁰¹ Bucken-Knapp, 76-77.

¹⁰² Olaf Almenningen, 'Noregs Mållag 1913-1920', in *Måltreising i 75 år: Noregs Mållag 1906-1981*, ed. by Olaf Almenningen and others (Oslo: Fonna Forlag, 1981), pp. 76-111 (p. 108).

Nynorsk: 'Dette var jammen den venaste songen eg nokon gong har høyr't' ('That was certainly the most beautiful song I have ever heard').



Figure 5.2 'Revolusjon? "Nå, hvor langt er dere kommet med revolusjonen her i Norge?" "Foreløbig slåss vi om hvordan den skal staves."' ('Revolution? "So, how far have you got with the revolution here in Norway?" "At the moment we're fighting about how to spell it."') Drawing by Ragnvald Blix in *Exlex* 1919; repr. in Haugen, *Language Conflict and Language Planning*, p. 87.

In 1929, the names of the two written standards had been officially changed, with *landsmål* becoming *nynorsk* and *riksmål* becoming *bokmål* and, like the names of all languages in modern Norwegian, none of these are capitalised, unlike glottonyms in English. Bokmål and Nynorsk were reformed again in 1938, under the guidance of Koht, and this time it was 'the people's language' that provided the basis for the numerous changes to both standards

as they moved closer towards the future Samnorsk goal. In Bokmål, whereas the 1917 reform had introduced elements of popular eastern Norwegian speech as 'optional' forms, many of these were now made main forms or alternate main forms. Other spellings were placed in a new category of *sideformer* (side forms), also known as *klammeformer* ('bracket forms'), which were allowed without discrimination in the writing of school pupils but not, for example, in textbooks. Many of the words that had once had high status and were in use in higher social classes were now downgraded or excluded entirely. For instance, the Danish spelling of the number *syv* (seven) temporarily became a side form in Bokmål to the main form *sju*, which was the only variant of the word in Nynorsk. As a result of these changes, Riksmål lived on as the name of an unofficial, more conservative variety of Bokmål. This counter-norm was – and to some extent still is – in widespread use in the more conservative parts of the press as well as by a number of publishers.

While Bokmål was brought closer to Nynorsk through the inclusion of more word forms based on spoken language, Nynorsk was brought closer to Bokmål by downgrading many of the more archaic spellings and introducing a greater number of word forms present in eastern Norwegian dialects. In the aftermath of 1938, many more schools moved to using Nynorsk as their language of instruction, as had also happened after the 1917 reform. Nynorsk appeared to be in the ascendant; it was the language of the future.

The 1938 reforms were opposed by both Noregs Mållag – although Nynorsk apparently stood to benefit – and Riksmålsforbundet, proving that these reforms were more of a political project than the result of pressure group activity.¹⁰³ Among some Nynorsk users, the more traditional forms of Nynorsk, closer to the language as codified by Aasen, were taken up as an unofficial standard. This archaic variant is known as *høgnorsk* (High

¹⁰³ Bucken-Knapp, p. 81.

Norwegian, here the English name 'Høgnorsk' will be used). While the dominant ideology of the 1938 reforms was based in social argumentation, the Høgnorsk ideology was strongly rooted in the nationalist discourse of *norskdomsrørsla* (the Norwegianness movement) in which, for some people, Aasen's language was the only standard that was purely Norwegian.¹⁰⁴ One Nynorsk organisation that did give its support to Koht's reform – and one that was growing in influence and significance as part of the Nynorsk movement – was Studentmållaget i Oslo (the Oslo Students' [Nynorsk] Language Association).¹⁰⁵

The strongest resistance to the reforms was to come from users of Bokmål in urban areas, and the Riksmål movement began to organise a counter-offensive. A large protest meeting called by Oslo Riksmålsforening (the Oslo Riksmål Association) had to be cancelled on 9 April 1940 as Germany invaded Norway that morning by sea and by air. The language debate would have to wait until the end of the war five years later to return to where it left off, but language struggles would continue.

5.10 1940-1945: Language activism under occupation

During the war, Vidkun Quisling's puppet government introduced their own spelling reforms. These Nazi spelling reforms also aimed towards a Samnorsk ideal, but a very different one from that Koht had been pursuing. Instead of aiming at more radical and popular common denominators to bridge the gap between Bokmål and Nynorsk, the Nazi spelling system moved towards more conservative and archaic spelling in both standards. The new spelling was introduced in the Nazified press, but it did not spread so easily in the

¹⁰⁴ Vaagland, pp. 77-78.

¹⁰⁵ Håvard Tangen and Geir Martin Pilskog, 'Den nynorske delen av folkefronten', in *Studentar i målstrid: Studentmållaget i Oslo 1900-2000*, ed. by Olaf Almenningen and others (Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget, 2003), pp. 153-170 (p. 162).

school system due to the resistance to Nazi influence by Norwegian teachers, and its influence was therefore merely temporary.¹⁰⁶

Six decades later, however, a particularly heated debate arose concerning the history of language activism during the Second World War. It began when the authorised history of the Riksmål movement, published in 1999, claimed that Riksmål activists had agreed at a meeting in 1941 to suspend the language conflict as a patriotic gesture in order to avoid dividing the efforts of Norwegians under occupation. The book also claimed that Noregs Mållag had refused to unite with Riksmålsforbundet in a bilateral language peace declaration.¹⁰⁷ Then, in a volume of a series published in 2001 and intended to be the canonical standard work on the history of ideas in Norway, historian Hans Fredrik Dahl verged on directly associating the Nynorsk movement with the Quisling regime, especially in one highly contentious statement:

Andelen av mål- og norskdomsfolk som sluttet opp om Quisling, var ikke ubetydelig. NS-regjeringen var da også sterkt engasjert i slike ting som folkedans, bygdeungdomslag og alle norske og norrøne uttrykk og former. Det fantes målfolk som så det slik at Ivar Aasens verk ble videreført av ideologer som Alfred Rosenberg i Tyskland og Vidkun Quisling i Norge.¹⁰⁸

The proportion of Nynorsk and Norwegianness activists who supported Quisling was not insignificant. The NS [Nasjonal Samling (National Unification, Quisling's party)] government was certainly also heavily engaged in such things as folk dancing, rural young people's societies and all expressions and forms of Norwegianness and Norseness. There were Nynorsk activists who considered that Ivar Aasen's work was being continued by

¹⁰⁶ Olaf Almenningen, 'Okkupasjon og etterkrigstid (1940-1965)', in *Språk og samfunn gjennom tusen år: Ei norsk språkhistorie*, ed. by Olaf Almenningen and others, 6th edn. (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2002), pp. 124-143 (pp. 124-125).

¹⁰⁷ Lars Roar Langslet, *I kamp for norsk kultur: Riksmålsbevegelsens historie gjennom 100 år* (Oslo: Riksmålsforbundet, 1999), p. 171.

¹⁰⁸ Hans Fredrik Dahl, *De store ideologienes tid: 1914-1955*, Norsk idéhistorie, 5 (Oslo: Aschehoug, 2001), p. 348.

ideologues such as Alfred Rosenberg in Germany and Vidkun Quisling in Norway.

Nynorsk author Kjartan Fløgstad (1944-) reacted strongly to these accusations in his 2004 book *Brennbart (Inflammable)*. This book has been described by some as a 'pamflett' ('pamphlet'),¹⁰⁹ but Tove Bull highlighted in a review that, although the book is polemical and published in a small format, it still contains well documented references and could at least just as easily be described as an academic text.¹¹⁰ Fløgstad demonstrated that, contrary to the Riksmål movement's official history, the 1941 Riksmålsforbundet meeting actually voted against postponing the language conflict, with a minority of only three members voting for the proposal.¹¹¹ Furthermore, as Riksmålsforbundet wished for the Nazi spelling reforms not to have a negative outcome for their conservative language ideology and grammar preferences, the very same gathering voted by an even larger majority to take measures to encourage the adoption of a new Riksmål standard that would undo Koht's work from the democratically enacted 1938 reforms. This amounted to collaborating with the Quisling regime's official language planning, and the proposal was endorsed with eighteen votes in favour, two votes against and one abstention.¹¹²

The committee of Noregs Mållag, on the other hand, had already sent a message to its members in November 1940 in which it encouraged them to focus on the prevailing national emergency:

Strid med landsmenn som meiner annleis om målet bør det ikkje vera. Det er samhald og sann folkevekking som skal til no. [...] Lat

¹⁰⁹ Finn-Erik Vinje, *NS, høgnorsken og riksmålet* (Oslo: Det Norske Akademi for Sprog og Litteratur, 2006), p. 9.

¹¹⁰ Tove Bull, 'Brannfarleg bok og brende bokmeldarar', *Prosa*, 1 (2006), 20-27 (p. 20).

¹¹¹ Kjartan Fløgstad, *Brennbart* (Oslo: Gyldendal, 2004), pp. 60-61.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 62.

fedrelandshugen verta varm. Ver trugen mot det norske i hug og åtferd.¹¹³

There should not be conflict with fellow countrypeople who have different opinions on language. What is needed now is unity and a true awakening of the population. [...] Let our fatherland's soul be warm. Be true to what is Norwegian in your heart and behaviour.

Moreover, the principal Nynorsk newspaper at the time, *Gula Tidend*, not willing to submit to German censorship, printed its last edition of the war the very day after the invasion.¹¹⁴ Meanwhile, *Aftenposten*, the newspaper most closely connected to the Riksmål movement, became Norway's largest newspaper during the war, directed by the occupying forces.

On Dahl's equation between Aasen on the one side and Rosenberg and Quisling on the other, Fløgstad reminded his readers that what Aasen had done was to recognise commonalities in Norwegian dialects and devise a written standard based on their shared features. Rosenberg, on the other hand, served as Reich Minister for the Occupied Eastern Territories and was sentenced to death in the Nuremberg trials for planning acts of aggression, crimes against peace, war crimes and crimes against humanity.¹¹⁵ In opposition to Fløgstad, Finn-Erik Vinje later claimed that Quisling may have been favourably disposed towards Nynorsk as an especially Norwegian language, basing this assessment largely on comments made by members of Quisling's regime in an attempt to persuade Nynorsk activists to co-operate with them.¹¹⁶ But the Quisling regime's conservative language planning model, aimed at 'purifying' the language by making it more archaic and eradicating Koht's socially based reforms of 1938, were in direct opposition to the important

¹¹³ Cited in Olaf Almenningen, 'Krigsåra 1940-1945', in *Målreising i 75 år: Noregs Mållag 1906-1981*, ed. by Olaf Almenningen and others (Oslo: Fonna forlag, 1981), pp. 194-204 (p. 197).

¹¹⁴ Guri Hjeltne, *Avisoppgjøret etter 1945* (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1990), p. 63, cited in Fløgstad, *Brennbart*, pp. 81-82.

¹¹⁵ Fløgstad, *Brennbart*, pp. 29-30.

¹¹⁶ Vinje, *NS, høgnorsken og riksmålet*, p. 11.

social current in the Nynorsk movement and only in partial agreement with aspects of the Høgnorsk ideology (see 5.9 above).¹¹⁷

If the Nynorsk movement is considered in its more recent guises as a movement generally promoting tolerance of dialects and linguistic diversity, in spite of some internal differences on these matters, the Nazi regime appears to be quite the opposite. Fløgstad cites an episode from Quisling's youth in 1904, when he is said to have violently attacked a young Saamund Bergland, who became auditor general in 1949, for speaking in dialect and then reminding Quisling that he too once spoke dialect.¹¹⁸ The German Reichskommissar in Norway, Josef Terboven, is also said to have spoken of Hitler's own personal aversion to dialects.¹¹⁹

Fascism can be characterised as extremism of the political centre, on the left-right spectrum.¹²⁰ Fløgstad cited Jan Petter Myklebust and Bernt Hagtvæt, who showed that, in the case of Norway, Fascism was also linked to the territorial, economical and cultural centre, as Quisling's Nasjonal Samling was 'overwhelmingly an urban-based party', with the 'best recruiting grounds' in and around Oslo, where Nynorsk was not widely used.¹²¹ Furthermore, Myklebust and Hagtvæt found that certain areas of Norway appeared immune to Nazi influence, and these coincided with the areas where Rokkan had shown (see 2.3

¹¹⁷ Haugen, *Language Conflict and Language Planning*, pp. 158-160.

¹¹⁸ Arne W. Aasland, 'Quislings vrangside', *Aftenposten*, 12 December 1999, cited in Fløgstad, *Brennbart*, pp. 9-10.

¹¹⁹ Berit Nøkleby, *Josef Terboven: Hitlers mann i Norge* (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1992), p. 263, cited in Fløgstad, *Brennbart*, p. 65.

¹²⁰ Seymour Martin Lipset, *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics*, expanded edn. (London: Heinemann, 1983), p. 129.

¹²¹ Jan Petter Myklebust and Bernt Hagtvæt, 'Regional Contrasts in the Membership Base of the Nasjonal Samling: A Study of the Political Ecology of Norwegian Fascism 1933-1945', in *Who Were the Fascists? Social Roots of European Fascism*, ed. by Stein Ugelvik Larsen, Bernt Hagtvæt and Jan Petter Myklebust (Bergen: Universitetsforlaget, 1980), pp. 621-650 (p. 621).

above) that the peripheral rural counter-cultures were strongest.¹²² The same was also demonstrated by Hans Hendriksen with reference to Sogn og Fjordane county, where '[t]he cultural and political core of society consisted of the Protestant low-church movement, and support for both the New Norwegian language [...] and the teetotaler movement'.¹²³ This does not mean that there is a converse intrinsic bond between the Riksmål movement and Fascism, but the events during the war and the more recent possible attempts at historical revisionism demonstrate the links between Riksmål, or the more conservative forms of Bokmål, and minimal hegemony. While the spelling reforms during occupation had little effect at all on the future development of Norwegian, the post-war political situation would have a major impact. In the meantime, Bokmål had been significantly strengthened as the hegemonic language, both in its more conservative wartime form and in its more radical, democratically derived pre-war standard:

Riksmålet var makta, og det radikale bokmålet – det vil seia 'Koht-rettskrivinga' – motmakta sitt språk, noko som blei understreka av krig og okkupasjon.¹²⁴

Riksmål was the language of power, and radical Bokmål – i.e. the product of the 'Koht spelling reform' – was the language of resistance. This was emphasised by the war and occupation.

Fløgstad's book led to considerable debate in the media, mainly focused on the various individuals involved in the controversy, but Fløgstad's primary aim was to discuss what the issues in the book revealed about the contemporary situation of Nynorsk, and in

¹²² Ibid., p. 637.

¹²³ Hans Hendriksen, 'Agrarian Fascism in Eastern and Western Norway: A Comparison', in *Who Were the Fascists? Social Roots of European Fascism*, ed. by Stein Ugelvik Larsen, Bernt Hagtvet and Jan Petter Myklebust (Bergen: Universitetsforlaget, 1980), pp. 651-656 (p. 652).

¹²⁴ Fløgstad, *Brennbart*, p. 64.

particular about the discrimination to which the language is often subjected.¹²⁵ It is the current situation of Nynorsk that will be addressed in the next chapter. Commenting on the *Brennbart* case, historian Kåre Lunden put forward that Dahl and Lars Roar Langslet, author of the Riksmål movement's official history, represented the intellectual hegemony in Norway, and that their historical revisionism was actually the result of their presence in social circles in which these ideas about Nynorsk and the Nynorsk movement are taken as common-sensical received knowledge.¹²⁶

Dette hovudtemaet i klassisk marxisme [det ideologiske hegemoniet] burde revitaliserast sterkt. Det gjeld openbert ei hovudforklaring på at fleirtalet så ofte røystar mot eigne interesser, og tek avstand frå eigne språk og eigen kultur. Liksom det forklårar at historikarar og andre skriv empirisk og logisk nonsens, i 'god tru'.

Føresetnaden for framgang for målrørsla, for oppretthald av Fløgstads kulturforlik og for framgang for alle andre politiske venstresaker, er nok mykje at *Klassekampen* og andre avslører det ideologiske hegemoniet.

This important theme of classic Marxism [ideological hegemony] should be revitalised considerably. It is evidently a question of providing a key explanation as to why most people so often vote against their own interests and distance themselves from their own language and culture. Just as it also explains why historians and others write empirical and logical nonsense 'in good faith'.¹²⁷

It is a main condition for the progress for the Nynorsk movement, for the maintenance of the cultural compromise about which Fløgstad writes, and for the advancement of all other left-wing political issues that [the newspaper] *Klassekampen* and others expose ideological hegemony.

¹²⁵ Bull, 'Brannfarleg bok og brende bokmeldarar', p. 21.

¹²⁶ Kåre Lunden, 'Tilbakestående kriminelle?', *Klassekampen*, 8 January 2005, pp. 24-25.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

Lunden's article included, however, a classic example of how deeply the linguistic hegemony of Bokmål penetrates. Although the article was entirely written in Nynorsk, the headline was printed in Bokmål.

6 Linguistic Wars of Position in Modern-Day Norway

6.1 The move towards national consolidation

Calvet claims that the Norwegian language debate in the immediate post-war period was essentially a discussion between élites. He cites a poll in 1946, in which 80% of the sample reported that they would like to see the two official standards of Norwegian merge, and 75% believed a unified norm should be based on Bokmål. Calvet argues that although the Norwegian language debate may have had democratic intentions, it hardly reflected 'the "spontaneous" beliefs of the population, who were more interested in standards and less anti-Danish than the planners'.¹ However, Calvet neglects that those beliefs of the population had only become 'spontaneous' as the result of hegemonic processes of standardisation, especially the one led by the Riksmål élite.

The experiences of the Second World War united the Norwegian nation and gave Norway a new direction. Arbeidarpartiet would no longer be so brazen in its support of popular language in the immediate post-war era due to the change in national mood. The unified political front of 1945 aimed to consolidate the nation as one in spite of previous internal conflicts and was the first of many Norwegian nation-building projects to find unequivocal resonance in the public at large.² The continued promotion of social democracy sought to resolve old social and economic inequalities, but it would also lead to a certain degree of centralisation. This was generally accepted by much of the population as part of a

¹ Calvet, p. 140.

² Øystein Sørensen, 'Hegemonikamp om det norske: Elitenes nasjonsbyggingprosjekter 1770-1945', in *Jakten på det norske: Perspektiver på utviklingen av en norsk nasjonal identitet på 1800-tallet*, ed. by Øystein Sørensen (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1998), pp. 17-48 (pp. 44-45).

process of modernisation. Norway was, after all, an economically poor country at the time, and the war had impoverished it further, especially in those regions where the effects of war had been most acute, such as northern Norway, which had been subjected to scorched earth tactics by the retreating Nazi forces.

6.2 Post-war urbanisation and centralisation

In 1944, in the midst of wartime, came the peak for the spread of Nynorsk, when the language was being used by 34.1% of primary school pupils. This figure fell to 29.7% by 1950, 22.7% in 1960, and 20.0% in 1965. The trends did vary in some counties, however, with some still reporting small increases in Nynorsk use up to 1949, while the percentages were declining in most areas. In one case, Sogn og Fjordane, there was even a minor increase up to 1957, but the reach of Nynorsk overall was clearly diminishing.³

The decline had begun towards the end of the war, and post-war conditions significantly hindered the promotion of Nynorsk. The suspension of language activism during the war, together with the loss of a large part of Noregs Mållag's materials in a bombing raid in 1944, meant that the Nynorsk movement had some difficulty re-establishing itself after the war. Furthermore, cultural and linguistic politics seemed lower priorities in the direct aftermath of the war, when Norway's economy was being entirely rebuilt and the country was undergoing processes of industrialisation and urbanisation. Crucially, however, as Bokmål was the language of the urban sphere, these developments strengthened the popularly held view that it was the language of the future.⁴

³ Åsmund Lien, 'Nynorsken i skuleverket', in *Måltreising i 75 år: Noregs Mållag 1906-1981*, ed. by Olaf Almenningen and others (Oslo: Fonna forlag, 1981), pp. 350-382 (p. 370).

⁴ Ibid., p. 371.

It is significant that Nynorsk was losing ground at a time when a new diffused future optimism was spreading through the nation.⁵ The perceived connotation between Bokmål and modernity, and the accompanying implication that Nynorsk was old-fashioned, may have influenced the outcomes of the local referenda that are held to decide on which language is to be used in a local school, but other concrete factors also impacted on the number of school districts that chose Nynorsk. Firstly, the outflux of people from the countryside and into the towns meant that a part of the population moved from Nynorsk areas into Bokmål areas. Secondly, this migration contributed to the amalgamation and centralisation of certain rural school districts and municipalities. In many cases, Bokmål was the language of the main centre of the new, larger units, and it therefore became the local majority language.⁶

Berge Furre outlined four main societal developments that were putting pressure on Nynorsk at this time: urbanisation, the growth of the tertiary sector, greater participation in institutionalised education and the impact of mass-market culture. In the urbanisation process, the move from areas where primary-sector occupations dominate into places with secondary- and tertiary-based economies means a change in social structures, as the latter imply a more stratified class structure in which there is considerably more pressure for linguistic conformity on a daily basis.⁷ In the secondary sector of industry, class differences are obvious, and there are often fewer opportunities for career progression, so workers may continue to value their own culture and their own language, as '*[d]et er ikkje god tone å "tala*

⁵ Hanto, p. 75.

⁶ Lien, pp. 372-373.

⁷ Berge Furre, 'Språk, samfunn og politikk', in *Mål og makt: Ny politikk for nynorsken og bygdekulturen*, ed. by Jan Askelund (Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget, 1971), pp. 29-51 (p. 36).

fint” som sjefane gjer’ (‘it is not good form to “speak smartly” like the bosses do’).⁸ In the tertiary sector there is more often at least an impression that opportunities for promotion exist, and there is consequently more of an impetus to behave and to speak ‘like the boss’, although true social mobility gradually becomes more difficult as a result of the growth of the sector.⁹ The increase in participation in higher education would, of course, work in favour of Nynorsk if the language were used throughout institutionalised education, but there are fewer materials available in Nynorsk for higher levels of education. As higher education serves primarily the tertiary sector, the pressure for linguistic conformity grows. The expanding mass-market culture, finally, is shaped by the highest ranks in the modern class structure and is made to reflect their language, Bokmål, and now increasingly English too.

Dei [som sit i toppstillingane] fangar mennesket inn i eit nett av skriftlege uttrykk frå morgon til kveld – frå avisa i brevsprekken, reklameplakatane på bussen, neonlys, arbeidsinstruksen på fabrikkene eller kontoret, radio og fjernsyn om kvelden. Dei fleste ord eit menneske møter, kjem i denne forma – ikkje ved samtale med familie eller venner i heimekjært og/eller heimekjent målføre.¹⁰

They [those who occupy the highest positions] trap people in a net of written expressions from morning to night – from the newspaper in the letterbox, the advertisements on the bus, neon lights, instructions at work in the factory or in the office, from radio and television in the evening. Most of the words a person encounters come in this form – not in conversation with family or friends in a homely and/or homelike dialect.

This growing domination of Bokmål was the foundation for the situation today, when even many Norwegians for whom Nynorsk is their first written language find Bokmål to be

⁸ Ibid., p. 37.

⁹ Ibid., pp. 37-38.

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 38-39.

easier as a result of their exposure to it (see 6.12 below for further evidence of how the dominance of Bokmål is reflected in the linguistic landscape of officially Nynorsk municipalities).¹¹

6.3 The language struggle heats up

Many parents in and around Oslo, especially in the affluent western half of the city, were opposed to the 1938 spelling reform in Bokmål. They effectively saw the new radical Bokmål as an entirely separate language to their preferred conservative Riksmål; Bokmål for them became almost synonymous with Samnorsk. In 1949, a group of them set up a new organisation, Foreldrebevegelsen i språksaken (the Parents' Movement in the Language Issue), which soon spread to other towns. When the government proposed the establishment of the Norsk språknemnd (Norwegian Language Committee) in 1951 with the primary aim of overseeing the rapprochement between the two standards, another movement was formed, affiliated with Riksmålsforbundet, known as Foreldreaksjonen mot samnorsk (the Parents' Action against Samnorsk). This organisation claims to have collected 407,119 signatures against Samnorsk by 1953.¹² The only precedent for such a large petition was one in 1947 against the distribution of contraceptives to Norwegian soldiers serving with the Allied occupying forces in Germany.¹³

The main concern of this parents' movement was the use of radical spellings in school textbooks, and in the early 1950s they led a campaign in which parents would manually 'correct' their children's textbooks to reflect more conservative Riksmål spelling norms,

¹¹ Håkon Kolmannskog, 'Treng me ei ny målførereising?', in *Målføri og nynorsken*, ed. by Håvard Tangen and others ([Oslo]: Studieutvalet i Norsk Målungdom, 1999), pp. 8-16 (p. 13).

¹² Langslet, p. 241.

¹³ Ibid.

based on a wordlist compiled by Arnulf Øverland (1889-1968), an author who had achieved a heroic status due to his opposition to the Nazi regime and imprisonment in Sachsenhausen, and who therefore ensured that Riksmål was seen as a language that had been oppressed during the war, even though the Riksmål movement had worked with the Quisling regime. In 1953, the Riksmål movement also set up its own language academy, Det Norske Akademi for Sprog og Litteratur (the Norwegian Academy for Language and Literature), to act as a counterweight to the official Norsk språknemnd. The name of the organisation is telling: just as the Nynorsk movement has certain banner words like *mål* (language, especially oral or oral-based), a banner word of the Riksmål movement was *sprog* (language, spelt the same way as in Danish, as opposed to the more modern Norwegian *språk*).

When a new official spelling reform for Bokmål and Nynorsk came in 1959, the Riksmål movement remained opposed to the official standard, even though the reform represented to some extent a retreat by official language planners from the more radical position of 1938.¹⁴ In the 1960s, the Riksmål movement was able to expand its network, especially in secondary schools, where their activists threw copies of textbooks with radical spelling onto bonfires.¹⁵ This strong image is often remembered as a symbol of the intransigence of the Riksmål movement. The current of the 1950s and 1960s would achieve its main aim in 1981, when most conservative spellings were again allowed in the official Bokmål norm, with the exclusion of some of the movement's most prominent banner words, such as *sprog*.

¹⁴ Almenningen, 'Okkupasjon og etterkrigstid', p. 141.

¹⁵ Fløgstad, *Brennbart*, p. 78.

6.4 The Vogt committee and 'language peace'

The responses of many Nynorsk activists to the regression of the language seemed to perceive a problem in the appearance, or the form, of Nynorsk, and it was at this point, during the 1950s, that the language struggle became more internalised within the Nynorsk movement. At the beginning of the 1960s, however, the struggle was ideologically recontextualised, as intellectuals directed their critical attention to the foreign cultural influences that were becoming evident in Norway at the time, and it was the sway of Anglophone cultural power that caused the greatest concern.¹⁶ Norway's new opening to foreign influences was particularly marked by its role as a founding signatory of the North Atlantic Treaty in 1949.

The essence of this new understanding of the significance of the Norwegian language struggle as a counter-hegemonic action in the face of globalising forces was expressed by Sigmund Skard, a professor of American literature. Skard notes that Norway, as a geographical periphery of Europe, has always been a recipient of both material and cultural goods:

Det har alltid vore eit avgjerande faktum i tilværet vårt at vi er få og små, og bur i utkanten, ved sjøve eksistensgrensa. Vi var alltid hovudsakleg ein mottakarnasjon, ofte av den reine naud. Heilt frå Komsa-kulturen langsmed ishavsstrendene var sjøve vår livsberging bygd på lån av framand teknikk. Og det galdt noko liknande for den høgare livsberginga som heiter åndsliv.¹⁷

It has always been a decisive fact of our existence that there are few of us, we are small, and we live on the edge, at the very boundary of existence. We were always mainly a recipient nation, often out of pure necessity. Ever since the Komsa culture along the shores of the Arctic Ocean, our livelihood itself was built with

¹⁶ Hanto, p. 76.

¹⁷ Sigmund Skard, *Målstrid og massekultur: Tankar til ettertanke* (Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget, 1963), p. 15.

foreign, borrowed technology. And something similar applied to that higher livelihood that we call culture [*åndsliv*].

Skard added, however, that the Norwegian culture, as was necessary for any culture, had also exhibited creativeness.¹⁸ Yet in a globalised world, traditional culture bearers are susceptible to assimilation or exclusion. In politics and in society, they are bound to end up as *'nunatukkar i den raskt stigande Svartisen av internasjonal massesivilisasjon som ikkje er sentimental overfor avvikarar'* ('nunataks in the quickly rising Svartisen [a glacier in northern Norway] of international mass civilisation, which is not sentimental about nonconformists'), but this need not be the case in terms of culture.¹⁹ Skard's thoughts indicated that some form of reconciliation or language peace may be necessary to protect Norwegian culture.

In 1964, Helge Sivertsen, the minister for church affairs and education, established a committee to report on how the language situation could be improved. This committee was in large part a response to the sense of cultural pressure that some believed was threatening the status of Norwegian as a national language, and it became known as *språkfredskomiteén* (the language peace committee). It was chaired by Hans Vogt, and was quite different from other committees previously set up to deal with language matters, in that it had a broader representation of cultural life, and was not intended to produce new spelling reforms.²⁰

When Vogt was asked in an interview with state broadcaster NRK on the day the recommendations were published (12 April 1966) if he believed language peace could be achieved, he responded:

Vel, språkstrid har jo vært nordmenns øyesten nå i hundre år, så det er jo vanskelig å tro at det norske folk så uten videre vil gi slipp

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 91.

²⁰ Gundersen, pp. 112-113.

på den. Men det kunne jo være at denne språkstrid på grunnlag av innstillingen ble brakt inn i noe mer fruktbare baner.²¹

Well, the language struggle has of course been the apple of Norwegians' eyes for a hundred years now, so it is indeed difficult to believe that the Norwegian people will give it up without further ado. But it could be that, on the basis of the recommendations, this language struggle can be brought onto a more productive path.

The principal idea promoted by the committee, although this was not expressly stated, was that it should no longer be a priority of official language policy to bring the two standards closer together to create a single Samnorsk standard.

The following year, Noregs Mållag published *Målreising 1967*, which put forward its updated political programme, and which viewed the Vogt report critically and with scepticism. It stated that the recommendation of the committee was evidence of the ability of the opponents of Nynorsk to obfuscate linguistic issues and to convince others of a view that could soon reverse the century of effort that had been put into the Nynorsk cause. In particular, Noregs Mållag was concerned by the fact that the committee did not consider the issue of the distance between Bokmål and the spoken language of most Norwegians, which is the banner argument of Nynorsk adherents. Furthermore, the clear attempt to take the language issue out of politics, as the conservative Riksmålsforbundet had wanted, was seen as an affront to the democratic process.²² *Målreising 1967* made it plain that the language struggle was being seen not only as a cultural issue, but also as a social issue.²³

²¹ Cited in Gundersen, p. 142.

²² Noregs Mållag, *Målreising 1967: Eit debattopplegg* (Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget, 1967), pp. 120-122.

²³ Hanto, p. 80.

6.5 1972: The Nynorsk movement and the EEC referendum

In the wake of the 1968 protests across Europe and with the rise of new social movements, there was a growing interest in politics among young people, not least in matters such as equality, ecology, minority rights and decentralisation. The influence of this upheaval came to be felt in Scandinavia, including in the Norwegian language struggle, which became politically radicalised, as it had been in the 1930s, in spite of the attempted depoliticisation implied by the vain search for linguistic peace.

Vi [i målrørsla] merkar nye frontar – i kamp om storindustrien, om kommunesamanslåing, om utbygging av fossar, om tilsvining av luft og natur, om storflyplass, om øyding av jord, om trålfiske innanfor fiskerigrensa – og framfor alt i EEC-spørsmålet. [...] Fleire og fleire oppdagar at det er storkapitalen og eit sentralisert statsbyråkrati som er hovudfaren og hovudfienden [...].²⁴

We [in the Nynorsk language movement] are becoming aware of new fronts – in battles over heavy industry, over the merging of municipalities, over the exploitation of waterfalls [for hydro-electricity], over pollution of air and nature, over big airports, over the destruction of land, over trawling within our fishing boundaries – and above all over the EEC issue. [...] More and more people are discovering that it is large capital and centralised state bureaucracy that are the main dangers and the main enemies [...].

The desire for decentralisation actually preceded 1968: it was already a key topic in the Norwegian social sciences, as exemplified by Stein Rokkan's work (see 2.3 above), and interest in it had begun to grow in the Nynorsk movement as a reaction to the Norwegian state's plans for the country's macro-regions in the 1950s and 1960s. For example, the development plan for western Norway was criticised as it was thought it would lead to greater centralisation, cuts in agriculture and forestry, depopulation of peripheral and rural

²⁴ Furre, p. 49.

areas and the expansion of heavy industry.²⁵ It seemed to Nynorsk activists that the regional development plans were based on a foregone conclusion that centralisation was unavoidable, but they wished to fight against this tendency.²⁶

Members of the Nynorsk movement took a particular interest in the plans to establish regional university colleges, and Nynorsk activists joined the campaign to set up some of these in more peripheral municipalities, not just in the larger regional centres. This was partly successful with the creation of Volda University College and the multi-campus Telemark University College.²⁷

When the Norwegian government applied for membership of the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1970, the Nynorsk movement began to mobilise against membership. The anti-EEC campaign was seen as part of the struggle against centralisation and depopulation of peripheral districts, especially as it was believed the introduction of the free movement of capital and common economic policy would be detrimental to the interests of rural areas.²⁸ If the peripheries were already poorly served within the state of Norway, activists wondered what it would be like if the whole of Norway were a periphery in the EEC. If the decline of agriculture and the depopulation of the countryside were having a negative effect on Nynorsk, then activists believed the policies of the EEC could only make the situation worse. This was a majority concern in the movement, as evidenced by the approval of a declaration by Noregs Mållag against EEC membership, at the 1971 national

²⁵ Egil Nysæter, 'Målsaka og Vestlandsplanen', in *Mål og makt: Ny politikk for nynorsken og bygdekulturen*, ed. by Jan Askelund (Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget, 1971), pp. 73-99 (p. 90).

²⁶ Lars S. Vikør, 'Noregs Mållag 1970-1974', in *Målreising i 75 år: Noregs Mållag 1906-1981*, ed. by Olaf Almenningen and others (Oslo: Fonna forlag, 1981), pp. 263-275 (p. 267).

²⁷ Olaf Almenningen, 'Fornyning og nyvakning for målarbeidet', in *Studentar i målstrid: Studentmållaget i Oslo 1900-2000*, ed. by Olaf Almenningen and others (Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget, 2003), pp. 191-222 (pp. 216-218).

²⁸ Jan Nordal Høie, 'EEC – eit vendepunkt for målrørsla', *Apropos: Organ for Studentmållaget i Oslo*, 12.4-5 (November 1970), p. 3.

conference, by 157 votes against 21.²⁹ Some members did leave the movement as a result of its stance on the EEC, while others joined, and one county Nynorsk association, in Rogaland, declared itself neutral on the matter.³⁰ The editors of the Nynorsk movement's most important printed organs at the time, *Norsk Tidend* and *Gula Tidend* did not agree with the anti-EEC line.³¹ The new Nynorsk newspaper *Dag og Tid*, founded in 1962, did on the other hand seem to be opposed to EEC membership: one anti-EEC article it printed was supplemented by the note '*Dette innlegget kom ikkje inn i Norsk Tidend*' ('This piece was not published in *Norsk Tidend*').³²

Particular support for the campaign against EEC membership would come from the student organisations in Bergen and Oslo. In 1971, Studentmållaget i Oslo captured the counter-hegemonic *Zeitgeist*, launching a new journal with the appropriate title *SENTRUM og periferi* (CENTRE and Periphery), in which even the use of upper-case letters served to underline the marginalisation to which Nynorsk activists believed the peripheries were subjected. The title was, however, changed in 1972 to the equally apt *Mål og makt* (Language and Power). The first issue opened with a condemnation of the acceptance of cultural and ideological hegemony:

Vi høyrer ofte når ei sak skal vurderast eller leggjast fram at 'dette er den naturlege måten å sjå saka på'. Konsekvensen av ei slik grunngjeving er som oftast også då at saka må fylgje ei fri og naturleg utvikling. Dette er til dømes tilfelle med den måten riksmålsfolk argumenterer i språksaka.

Men tek vi til å granske dette er det ikkje uproblematisk slik det gjev seg ut for å vera.

²⁹ Vikør, 'Noregs Mållag 1970-1974', p. 267.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 268.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Olav Randen, 'Nasjonalt sjølvstende – eit vekstvilkår for folkemålet', *Dag og Tid*, 3 August 1972, pp. 12-13 (p. 12).

Kven definerer at noko er naturleg? Ut frå kva for føresetnader blir det gjort?

[...] Kva krefter i samfunnsutviklinga vil ein tene ved den gitte definering?³³

When an issue is to be appraised or proposed, we often hear that 'this is the natural way to look at the issue'. The consequence of such a justification is usually that the issue must then also follow a free and natural development. This is the case, for example, with the way that Riksmål supporters argue their side in the language debate.

But if we start to investigate this, it is not as unproblematic as it appears to be.

Who defines that something is natural? On what premises is it done?

[...] Which forces of societal development stand to gain from the given definition?

This counter-hegemonic line would be the approach of the Nynorsk movement's youth wing for some time to follow.

In addition to the indirect effects of the economic changes that EEC membership would have brought, members of the Nynorsk movement also saw more direct potential threats to Nynorsk. Although the EEC would put all of its member states' official languages on an equal footing, Nynorsk activists saw this in the light of Norwegian language history: Nynorsk had been equal to Bokmål since 1885, but it was still subject to considerable pressure and discrimination.³⁴ It followed that, if it was so difficult for Nynorsk to gain power in Norway, then it would be even more difficult for the language to assert its power if the power structures were at a supranational level.³⁵ The widespread perception among the

³³ Steinar Læg Reid, 'Føreord', *SENTRUM og periferi*, 1.1 (1971), 1.

³⁴ Egil Nysæter, 'EEC og folkemålet', *SENTRUM og periferi*, 1.2 (1971), 19-28 (p. 20).

³⁵ Asgeir Olden, 'Målreisinga og det nasjonale spørsmålet', *Mål og makt*, 3.2 (1973), 17-21 (p. 19).

Nynorsk campaigners that the EEC was a project led by capitalist interests meant that it was also associated with the promotion of commercialised mass-market culture.³⁶

On 25 September 1972, 53.5% of Norwegians voted against joining the EEC, with 46.5% voting for membership, on a referendum turnout of 79.2%. The strongest 'yes' vote was from Oslo, where 66.5% voted to join. The other counties to vote in favour of membership were also 'centre' counties in close proximity to Oslo: Akershus, Buskerud and Vestfold. The strongest 'no' votes came from the peripheral northern counties of Nordland (72.5% against), Finnmark (70.4%) and Troms (70.2%), but also from the peripheral western (and predominantly Nynorsk) county of Møre og Romsdal (70.8%). Since the Second World War, Nynorsk has not had a strong position in northern Norway, but the Nynorsk movement's activities in the northern counties would intensify during the 1970s, especially in connection with the promotion of dialects. Before the referendum, dialects had already begun to play a major role in the reinforcement of northern Norwegian regional identity, with the establishment of Hålogaland Teater, based in Tromsø, in 1971. This theatre uses northern dialects in most of its plays. The 1970s also saw the growth of a significant dialect songwriting milieu in northern Norway.³⁷

Although it is difficult to gauge the influence of the Nynorsk campaign on the result, the outcome of the referendum has frequently been portrayed as a victory for Nynorsk ideals, especially of the periphery over the centre. Sylfest Lomheim has discussed the notional ideology of a hypothetical typical '*nynorskmenneske*' ('Nynorsk person'):

³⁶ Ola Svein Stugu, 'EEC, samfunnsutvikling og målsak', *SENTRUM og periferi*, 1.2 (1971), 29-31 (p. 30).

³⁷ Kirsten Johannesen, 'Bruk av dialekt i den nordnorske viserørsla', *Mål og makt*, 19.3-4 (1989), 1-4.

[N]ynorskmennesket held fast på at periferi skal ha noko å seia. Det held populistisk makt opp mot eit språkleg monopol som har røter i ein ekskluderande kultur. Det var nynorskmennesket i alle nordmenn som vann EF-kampen i 1972. Utan å vita det er eg nøydd til å tru at ekte nynorskmenneske røysta nei då. Det er tale om ei grunnhaldning.³⁸

[T]he Nynorsk person maintains that the peripheries should have their say. S/he holds populist power up against a linguistic monopoly that is rooted in an exclusive culture [a culture of exclusion]. It was the Nynorsk person in all Norwegians who won the struggle on the EC [European Community] in 1972. Without knowing it, I am compelled to believe that real Nynorsk people voted no then. We are speaking about a fundamental attitude.



Figure 6.1 This drawing demonstrates the type of coalitions formed between the youth sections of the Nynorsk movement and other movements in the mid-1970s. While the red flag leads the crowds, the banner 'Kamp for nynorsken' ('Fight for Nynorsk') stands alongside another reading 'Fri abort' ('Free abortions'). Note the difference in proportions between the different banners. The drawing accompanied a section on 1 May events in the newspaper of Studentmållaget i Bergen, *Vestlandsfa'n*, 13.3 (1976), p. 2.

6.6 Stalin and the Norwegian language struggle

Over the past decades, there has been some disagreement between Nynorsk activists regarding whether to pursue the promotion of Nynorsk as the only national language,

³⁸ Sylfest Lomheim, 'Det nynorske mennesket – finst det?', *Mål og makt*, 16.3-4 (1986), 2-10 (pp. 8-9).

thereby effectively judging Bokmål to be a foreign language, or whether to accept the existence of Bokmål. Accepting the existence of Bokmål could mean either wishing to see it alongside Nynorsk or aiming at a future Samnorsk norm. One group that wished to see Nynorsk as the only national language was associated with Arbeidaranes Kommunistparti (marxist-leninistane) (the Workers' Communist Party (Marxist-Leninists) – AKP (m-l)). AKP (m-l) was founded in 1973, and the next year, an anonymously authored document suggesting a party line on language policy came under the public spotlight.³⁹ The document was based on the thoughts of some members of Studentmållaget i Bergen (the Bergen Students' [Nynorsk] Language Association), and had been intended for internal discussion.⁴⁰

This divisive piece made waves in the language movement, as it centred on a series of articles first published in *Pravda* in 1950 and signed by Joseph Stalin. It seems possible that Stalin's linguistic commentaries were chosen as they were the only example the anonymous author or authors could find of a Marxist icon who dealt explicitly with a question of language, even though the personality cult of Stalin had been denounced by Khrushchev almost twenty years earlier. That Gramsci was not a 'classic' for the Norwegian left is demonstrated by Lars Vikør, writing at the time:

For mange har det blitt naturleg å ta utgangspunkt i ein marxistisk klasseanalyse når dei analyserer språksituasjonen. Det finst ingen presedens for dette hos dei marxistiske klassikarane, ingen av desse tok opp språkspørsmålet til drøftings. Med eitt unntak: Josef Stalin [...].

For many, it has been natural to start from a Marxist analysis of class when they analyse the language situation. There is no precedent for this in the Marxist classics, none of which take up the

³⁹ 'Norsk målreising: Kamp mellom to vegar', *Materialisten*, 3.1 (1975), pp. 11-35.

⁴⁰ Olaf Almenningen, 'Frå kamp mot utviklinga til språkleg frigjerig', in *Studentar i målstrid: Studentmållaget i Oslo 1900-2000*, ed. by Olaf Almenningen and others (Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget, 2003), pp. 223-253 (p. 236).

language question for discussion. With one exception: Joseph Stalin [...].⁴¹

In any case, it is highly unlikely that his linguistic writings were well known in Norway.

Four years later, Knut Vikør wrote that Gramsci had written much about culture, and French Marxists such as Althusser had developed the themes of ideology and class conflict, but '[i]ngen av disse skriv spesielt mykje om språket' ('none of these write a great deal about language').⁴²

Stalin wrote these articles as a personal attack against the linguist Nikolay Yakovlevich Marr, but the author of the AKP (m-l) document does not seem to be aware of this.⁴³ An extract of Stalin's linguistic views had been published in Nynorsk in the newspaper run by Studentmållaget i Bergen, *Vestlandsfa'n*, in 1969, but had excluded the polemic with Marr.⁴⁴ Essentially, while Marr considered that language change was controlled by the economic and class base yet was also part of the superstructure, Stalin put forward that language was both independent from the control of the base and independent from the institutions of the superstructure. This position led to the resurgence in the Soviet Union of the Neogrammarian school of linguistics, to which Gramsci himself had been so opposed.⁴⁵ In Italy, Stalin's language theories had been disputed strongly, albeit in an obscure article, by the writer Danilo Montaldi (1929-1975). Writing in 1953, under a pseudonym, Montaldi put forward that language was part of the superstructure, illustrating

⁴¹ Lars S. Vikør, 'Stalins språkanalyse og den norske målstoda', *Ventil*, 4.4 (1974), 23-29 (p. 23).

⁴² Knut S. Vikør, 'Språk, dialekt og klassekamp', *Mål og makt*, 8.3 (1978), 2-11 (pp. 2-3).

⁴³ Ernst Håkon Jahr, 'Linjedebatten i *Dag og Tid*: Ein nødvendig oppklaringsrunde', *Mål og makt*, 5.1 (1975), 7-17 (p.16).

⁴⁴ Josef Stalin, 'Marxismen i språkvitskapen', trans. by 'O. A.', *Vestlandsfa'n*, 6.4 (November 1969), pp. 1, 4-5.

⁴⁵ Leonardo Salamini, *The Sociology of Political Praxis: An Introduction to Gramsci's Theory* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), p. 182.

his case with evidence from Italian language history. According to Montaldi, the Italian national language was a good example of the links between class and language, as the middle classes had created a language on their own terms.⁴⁶ Significantly, however, Stalin made a stronger connection between language and nation than between language and class – a connection that he instead refuted – and so he guaranteed that his own second language, Russian, would enable Moscow to continue its central domination over the ‘linguistic others’ in the Soviet Union.⁴⁷

Based on Stalin’s hypotheses, the Norwegian Marxist-Leninists concluded that Nynorsk was the only language that could truly be considered Norwegian, and Bokmål was therefore actually Danish, or specifically ‘*tillempa dansk*’ (‘adapted Danish’) or ‘*norsk-dansk*’ (‘Norwegian-Danish’, i.e. Norwegianised Danish).⁴⁸

In opposition to the Marxist-Leninists’ view that the struggle for Nynorsk was a nationalist struggle, there were those members of the Nynorsk movement who preferred to view the language question in social terms. The latter group emphasised the role of the contemporary language and were not critical of all kinds of Bokmål, many believing, on the contrary, that the more radical forms of Bokmål could also be weapons against linguistic oppression. Many of the supporters of this social line were members or sympathisers of Sosialistisk Valgforbund (Socialist Electoral League, ‘Sosialistisk Valgforbund’ in Bokmål – SV). In fact, it has been claimed that, in the 1970s, those in the Nynorsk movement who did not already belong either to AKP (m-l) or to SV almost felt obliged to choose between one or

⁴⁶ [Danilo Montaldi] = Sisto, ‘La linguistica, le classi e il teorico della sconfitta’, *Battaglia Comunista*, 14.11-12 (1953); repr. in *Rivista italiana di dialettologia*, 2 (1978), 59-68.

⁴⁷ Piers Gray, ‘Totalitarian Logic: Stalin on Linguistics’, *Critical Quarterly*, 35 (1993), 16-36; repr. in *Stalin on Linguistics and Other Essays*, ed. by Colin MacCabe and Victoria Rothschild (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), pp. 164-188 (p. 184).

⁴⁸ ‘Norsk målreising: Kamp mellom to vegar’, p. 23.

the other.⁴⁹ It was, however, still possible to agree with the national line of argumentation without agreeing with the politics of AKP (m-l); for example, many of the traditional supporters of the Høgnorsk current (see 5.9 above) had political ideologies significantly opposed to those of AKP (m-l).

In actual fact, however, the language issue had come up in the Marxist-Leninist movement earlier. A debate piece from early 1973 in the Marxist-Leninist periodical *Tjen folket*, signed by a 'Vestmann og ml'ar' ('Western Norwegian and m-l member') stressed much more clearly the social sides of the language movement.⁵⁰ Printed just before the foundation of AKP (m-l), it advocated greater use among Marxist-Leninists of the language of the people; both Nynorsk and radical Bokmål. In contrast with the later document, this article suggested that Bokmål and Nynorsk should be afforded fully equal status, including aiming to use Nynorsk in 50% of material published in the newspaper *Klassekampen* and 50% of books by the publisher Oktober. Meanwhile, it was recommended that study plans and political programmes should be produced in both standards.

In spite of these requests, Bokmål dominated in the publications of AKP (m-l), but even so one person ('Bernhard') complained that one of his colleagues at work could not read Nynorsk and so could not read certain articles in *Klassekampen*.⁵¹ The same 'Bernhard' also complained that the presentation of AKP (m-l) language policy as promoting only Nynorsk was unrepresentative, as this was driven forward both as an ideological plan and in written form in the press primarily by students.⁵²

⁴⁹ Almenningen, 'Frå kamp mot utviklinga til språkleg frigjering', p. 236.

⁵⁰ 'MI-rørsla og målrørsla', *Tjen folket*, 2 (1973), pp. 17-20.

⁵¹ Bernhard, 'Klassekampen på nynorsk', *Tjen folket*, 5 (May 1975), p. 10.

⁵² Bernhard, '"Arbeiderklassen må velge nynorsk"', *Tjen folket*, 5 (May 1975), p. 11.

Nevertheless, the position on the promotion of Nynorsk as the only national language gained some ground in the movement with the inclusion of this objective in the constitution of Norsk Målungdom (Norwegian [Nynorsk] Language Youth) in 1976.⁵³ Over time, however, the qualitative achievement of the social line would be greater, through the promotion of dialects.

6.7 Norsk Målungdom and the 'dialect wave'

Youth organisations and student organisations had long been of great importance to the Nynorsk cause, but in the post-1968 climate they truly came to the forefront of the movement. It was the youth wing of the movement that led the promotion of dialects, giving rise to the so-called *dialektbølge* (dialect wave). Through the tactic of changing their own linguistic praxis, the young activists of the Nynorsk movement contributed much to affording dialects greater prestige. Before these actions, if Norwegians came to a city such as Oslo from many other parts of the country, especially from northern Norway, they most often felt obliged to change the way they spoke in order to be accepted socially.

Although the Norwegian written language has two written standards, it has no widely accepted standard spoken form (see 1.1 above). In 1973, Finn-Erik Vinje opened a debate on the standardisation of spoken Norwegian, which he believed was now a necessity, and could be carried out based on the language of Oslo.⁵⁴ In one contribution to the debate that followed, Åge Steinset pointed out that, although there was not a standard spoken

⁵³ Almenningen, 'Frå kamp mot utviklinga til språkleg frigjering', p. 242.

⁵⁴ Finn-Erik Vinje, 'Talemålsnormering', *Arbeiderbladet*, 1 February 1973; repr. in *Ny målstrid: Ei samling artikler og innlegg om språk, samfunn og ideologi*, ed. by Geirr Wiggen, 2nd edn. (Oslo: Forlaget Novus, 1974), pp. 63-66.

language, this did not mean that Norwegian dialects had not been subject to oppression through hegemonic processes.

Middel- og overklassen i byane har definert kva som er kulturspråket[: K]va som er dana og akseptabelt talemål. Dei har dessutan (fordi dei har makt) fått folket på bygdene og dei lavare klassane i byane til å akseptere dette. I sin tur har sjølv sagt dette ført til at desse har sett på sitt eige talemål som mindreverdige, og som noko ein bør kvitte seg med (i alle fall normere) om ein vil gjere rekning med å bli tatt alvorleg.⁵⁵

The urban middle and upper classes have defined what is the language of culture[:] what is educated and acceptable speech. They have also (because they have power) got the people from the countryside and the lower classes in the towns to accept this. In turn, this has of course led them to perceive their own spoken language as inferior, and as something that they should get rid of (or at least normalise) if they want to count on being taken seriously.

There does not appear to be any major communicative necessity for Norwegians to abandon their dialects when speaking to other Norwegians. In a study carried out by Steinset, it was found that those who altered their speech did cite communication difficulties as the most common reason for speaking differently, but further investigation found that the problem was not that other people could not understand them, but that they did not want to understand them.⁵⁶

Also entering into this debate, Thore Roksvold referred to the redundancy in human language as a reason why it was not necessary to conform to a spoken norm, as human communication tends to employ more linguistic tools than are absolutely necessary to

⁵⁵ Åge Steinset, 'Talemålsnormering som undertrykking', *Arbeiderbladet*, 7 March 1973; repr. in *Ny målstrid: Ei samling artikler og innlegg om språk, samfunn og ideologi*, ed. by Geirr Wiggen, 2nd edn. (Oslo: Forlaget Novus, 1974), pp. 85-87 (p. 85).

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

understand a message: even just the context in which communication takes place can help to overcome any communicative gaps that may otherwise exist.⁵⁷

The specific promotion of dialects had been a separate ideology from the Nynorsk movement, with particular links to Østlandsk reisning and the Samnorsk movement under Halvdan Koht (see 5.9 above). Through the new adherence of the Nynorsk movement to this ideology, the movement would score an important victory. The 1973 debate on the standardisation of spoken language provided a theoretical basis for the campaign, and Norsk Målungdom led its first *dialektaksjon* (dialect action) with leaflets and badges in 1975, initially without the participation of Noregs Mållag.⁵⁸ When Noregs Mållag joined in the next year, they made their own propaganda material, although it did not appeal to Norsk Målungdom due to its inclusion of runic-like text (see figure 6.2 below).⁵⁹ This text perhaps brought too many connotations to the nationalist Høgnorsk ideology and was a distraction from the social inspiration to the campaign.

The dialect actions, generally held in early spring, also included public demonstrations. One leaflet⁶⁰ lists the slogans for the 1981 dialect week in Bø, which are listed below with translations:

‘FRAM FOR DIALEKTANE’

‘DIALECTS FORWARD’

‘ALLE DIALEKTAR ER LIKE GODE’

‘ALL DIALECTS ARE EQUALLY
GOOD’

⁵⁷ Thore Roksvold, ‘Fram for dialektreising!’, *Kontrast*, 58 (1976), 13-17.

⁵⁸ Olaf Almenningen, ‘Målarbeid mellom ungdomen – gjennom 20 år’, *Mål og makt*, 17.1 (1987), 2-25 (p. 18).

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Bø Mållag and others, Programme for Dialektveka i Bø 1981, p. 4; Oslo, Riksarkivet, PA-0700 Norsk Målungdom, H-0088 Ymse saker (dialekt), Oppsum. frå dialektaksjonen 1981.

'DIALEKTANE ER FULLGODE SPRÅK SOM KAN BRUKAST I ALLE SAMANHENGAR'	'DIALECTS ARE FULLY ADEQUATE LANGUAGES THAT CAN BE USED IN ALL CONTEXTS'
'DET NYNORSKE SKRIFTMÅLET ER DEN BESTE FELLESNEMNAREN FOR DEI NORSKE DIALEKTANE'	'THE NYNORSK WRITTEN LANGUAGE IS THE BEST COMMON DEMONINATOR FOR NORWEGIAN DIALECTS'
'SLEPP DIALEKTANE LAUS I NRK'	'SET DIALECTS FREE ON NRK'
'NEI TIL STRENGARE TALEMÅLS- -NORMERING I RADIO OG FJERNSYN'	'NO TO STRICTER SPEECH NORMS ON RADIO AND TELEVISION'
'VIS RESPEKT FOR DIALEKTANE'	'SHOW RESPECT FOR DIALECTS'



Figure 6.2 'Speak dialect – write Nynorsk': one of the 'runic' symbols used for dialect actions by Noregs Mållag, which was not popular with Norsk Målungdom. Reprinted in *Mål og makt*, 10.1 (1980), p. 47.

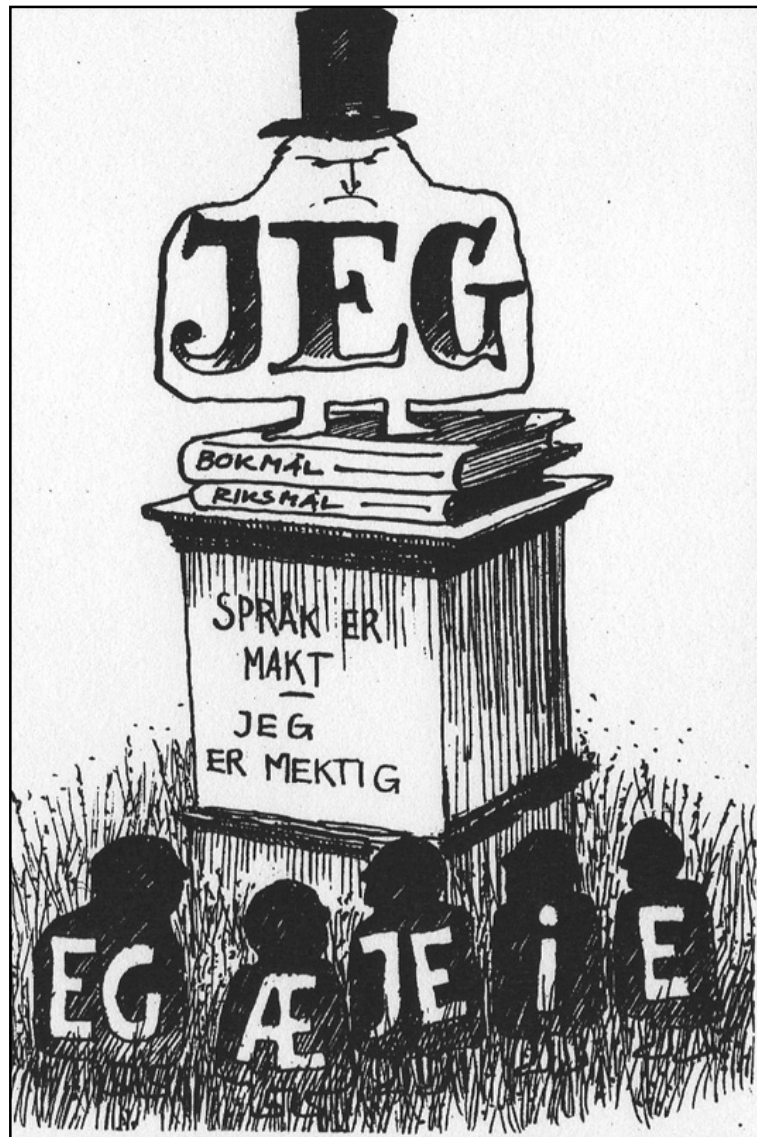


Figure 6.3 Linguistic hegemony as portrayed by Studentmållaget i Bergen in *Vestlandsfa'n*, 16.1 (1981), p. 2. The hegemon in his top hat wears the standard Bokmål/Riksmål first person singular pronoun, standing on top of the Danish-based standards and a plinth inscribed with 'Language is power / I am powerful'. The subaltern dialect speakers and Nynorsk users stand below in the shadows, wearing their own first person singular pronouns.

The nature of the dialect discrimination that existed at the outset of the campaign is exemplified by some examples given in a leaflet produced in 1979 by Dialektnemnda (the Dialect Committee), composed of members of Noregs Mållag, Norsk Målungdom, Kringkastingsringen (the Broadcasting Circle, a group that promotes Nynorsk in the media) and Noregs Ungdomslag (the Youth Association of Norway, a more general traditional

youth movement). The leaflet was intended to mobilise people for the dialect cause, and quoted some lines from emotive school pupils' essays that had been printed in the regional newspaper *Oppland Arbeiderblad*:

Hans er ny i klassen, og har det ikke så greitt. Klassekameratene erter ganske ofte, fordi han har en annen dialekt og annerledes klær.

Lise kommer fra Bergen. Hun blir ofte mobba for dialekta. De andre sier: 'Hvorfor snakker du slik?' Da gikk hun i et hjørne for å grate. Dette gjentok seg ofte. Dag etter dag.⁶¹

Hans is new in class, and he is not enjoying it much. His classmates tease him quite often because he has another dialect and different clothes.

Lise comes from Bergen. She is often bullied because of her dialect. The others say: 'Why do you speak like that?' So she went into a corner to cry. This happened again often. Day after day.

The same leaflet also included evidence of the lack of dialects on children's television programmes and the effect that this had on children, with a comment from children at Åsgård nursery school in the northern city Tromsø, which had been published in *Dagbladet*:

... En dag i samlinga i barnehagen lekte vi at vi var på TV. Og vet dere hva: Alle ungene pratet 'søring'. Det syntes vi var litt dumt, og vi snakket etterpå om hvorfor vi gjorde det. En av guttene sa: 'Det er jo slik de prater på Barne-TV'. Nå syntes vi at det kan komme flere fra Nord-Norge og prate slik som vi gjør...⁶²

... One day in assembly at nursery, we pretended that we were on TV. And you know what: all the children spoke 'southern'. We thought that was a bit silly, and we spoke afterwards about why we did it. One of the boys said: 'That's how they talk on children's TV though'. Now we thought there should be more from northern Norway who speak like we do...

⁶¹ Dialektnemnda, 'Dialektaksjonen 79', p. 3; Oslo, Riksarkivet, PA-0700 Norsk Målungdom, H-0088 Ymse saker (dialekt), Dialektaksjonen 1979.

⁶² Ibid., p. 4.

Although the dialect actions meant moving away from a sole focus on written Nynorsk, their impact was also used to promote Nynorsk too. Due to the origins of the two official written standards, most Norwegian dialects are more similar to Nynorsk than to Bokmål, and school textbooks often underline this point. One schoolbook from the mid-1980s appealed to pupils' attitudes thus:

For mange er det framleis slik at bokmålet har fleire praktiske fordelar enn nynorsken. For kvar språkbrukar blir da spørsmålet: Kva skal telje mest når eg skal velje skriftmål? Det at bokmålet kan by på fleire praktiske fordelar enn nynorsken, eller det at nynorsken ligg nærmast dialekten min?⁶³

For many people it is still the case that Bokmål has more practical advantages than Nynorsk. For each language user, the question is then: What matters most for me when choosing a written language? Is it that Bokmål can offer more practical advantages than Nynorsk, or is it that Nynorsk is closer to my dialect?

The dialect wave was relatively successful, as it increased the awareness of dialects, and most of all gave people more confidence to use them in different contexts. In some ways, however, the dialect actions served to modify a trend that had been going on since the end of the Second World War. As more people from working class or agricultural backgrounds moved into employment in high-status professions, they decided to continue speaking as they had done previously. The shift was a generational one, moving slightly beyond the problems Berge Furre had described (see 6.2 above). In broadcasting, for instance, the revolution of the dialect wave would take longer to have an impact, partly due to the rate of

⁶³ Roger Lockertsen, *Dialekt og nynorsk: Hjelpesk for nynorskopplæring – Finnmark og Troms*, 2nd edn. (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1985), p. 16.

turnover in personnel. Once the younger generation began to take up positions in broadcasting, dialects made greater inroads.⁶⁴ The dialect actions continued until 1984.⁶⁵

6.8 1994: The EU referendum and Lillehammer

There was a certain backlash against the social line from some quarters during the second half of the 1980s, and Norsk Målungdom began to make more references to nationalism. Their brand of nationalism has tended to be more inclusive than exclusive (see figure 6.4 below), but it has still come under criticism.⁶⁶ While Stephen Walton, for example, recognised where the new wave of nationalism had begun, as a by-product of the 1972 anti-EEC referendum campaign and the subsequent importance of the AKP (m-l) debate, he pointed to Benedict Anderson's depiction of nations as 'imagined communities' (see 1.5 above) and the lack of interest in nationalism among people in other European countries who described themselves as progressive. He warned against excessive reliance on nationalism:

Inklusjons- og eksklusjonssystemet til nasjonalismen spelar seg i dag ut i ein ideologisk samanheng der rasismen blømer. Ein kan ikkje lata som om denne samanhengen ikkje finst. Det er til og med slik at somme av dei som har argumentert nasjonalt, har gjort det i god tru av di dei oppriktig ser nasjonalismen som ei motvekt mot rasismen [...]. [...] Eg vil påstå at jamvel om ein er aldri så mykje anti-rasist, så vil den nasjonalistiske argumentasjonen om språket vera med på å stø nett dei handningana ein vil til livs, vera med på å skapa eit klima der dei betre kan trivast.⁶⁷

The inclusion and exclusion system of nationalism is today played out in an ideological context in which racism flourishes. You

⁶⁴ Agnete Nesse, *Bydialekt, riksmål og identitet – Sett fra Bodø* (Oslo: Novus forlag, 2008), p. 56.

⁶⁵ Lars S. Vikør, 'The Position of Standardized vs. Dialectal Speech in Norway', *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 80 (1989), 41-59 (p. 53).

⁶⁶ Stephen Walton, 'Kva er ein nasjon?', *Mål og makt*, 20.1 (1990), 1-24.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

cannot pretend that this context does not exist. It is even the case that some of those who have used national argumentation have done so in good faith because they genuinely see nationalism as a counterweight to racism [...]. [...] I would contend that even if someone is ever so much an anti-racist, nationalist argumentation about language will still contribute to supporting the very attitudes they would like to get rid of, and contribute towards creating a climate in which those attitudes can more easily prosper.



Figure 6.4 This slogan from Norsk Målungdom modifies and inverts the royal motto of Norway, '*Alt for Norge*' ('Everything for Norway'), to exclaim 'Norway for everyone!'. Reproduced in a brochure entitled '*Norsk Målungdom*', c. 1991.

The Nynorsk movement's recourse to nationalism intensified in the run-up to the 1994 referendum on Norwegian accession to the European Union (EU) when, once again, the movement would campaign against membership. Noregs Mållag published a book on the potential effects EU membership could have on the Norwegian language,⁶⁸ and a special issue on the EU question of *Mål og makt*, the journal of Studentmållaget i Oslo, was printed

⁶⁸ Olav Randen, *Norsk i EU: Ei gransking av kva følgjer ei norsk tilslutning til EØS og EU kan få for norsk skriftspråk og talemål* (Oslo: Noregs Mållag, 1994).

in six times the usual numbers.⁶⁹ In the book that Noregs Mållag produced, Olav Randen expressed deep concern that the Norwegian language would be demoted in status through a European nation-building process:

Då får det norske språket same status som tøflane, som vi bruker innan husets fire vegger, men som berre dei mest distrée av oss går til selskaps i. Til dess dei er utslitne og dei fleste innser at tøflar hørde ei forgangen tid med dårleg isolasjon og golvtrekk til.⁷⁰

Then the Norwegian language will have the same status as the slippers that we use within the four walls of our home, but that only the most absent-minded of us would wear to a party. Until that time that they are worn out and most people realise that slippers belonged to a bygone age with bad insulation and floor draught.

Much of the rhetoric around the EU question in Norway is related to the very word *union*. When the name *European Union* became commonly used, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs once chose to translate it as *Den europeiske sammenslutning*⁷¹ (in Bokmål), or the plural form *Dei europeiske samanslutningane*⁷² (in Nynorsk) which caused some consternation. Sylfest Lomheim claimed that the Ministry had gone into an '*uløseleg dilemma*' ('irresolvable dilemma').⁷³ He put forward that the word *union* was negatively charged in Norwegian due to its particular connotations with Norway's former political union with Sweden, whereas he claimed it has a more positive sound in English and other languages, including in Danish. If the Ministry used *union*, they would therefore play into the hand of anti-EU campaigners, but if they did not use it, they would open themselves to

⁶⁹ *Mål og makt*, 'Til lesarane', 24.4 (1994), 1-2 (p. 1).

⁷⁰ Randen, *Norsk i EU*, p. 126.

⁷¹ Ottar Fyllingsnes, '"Union" er ikkje "union", seier språkforskaren', *Dag og Tid*, 11 November 1993, p. 5.

⁷² Randen, *Norsk i EU*, p. 10.

⁷³ Cited in Fyllingsnes, '"Union" er ikkje "union", seier språkforskaren'.

criticism for trying to circumvent the negative connotations of the word. This had also surfaced in the debate leading to the 1972 referendum, when Bjarne Slapgard named '*politiske unionar med sine byråkratiske institusjonar*' ('political unions with their bureaucratic institutions') as a force in the processes of '*avnorsking*' ('de-Norwegianisation') to which he believed Norway had often been subjected, clearly implying the periods of political union with Denmark and Sweden.⁷⁴

A report carried out by the Ministry of Culture established that Norwegian would become an official language of the EU. As for Bokmål and Nynorsk, it was not the plan to recognise them as two official languages, but instead to base Norway's EU language policy on the existing rules regarding official use of Bokmål and Nynorsk, meaning that the two standards would be treated equally.⁷⁵ Geirr Wiggen has interpreted this primarily as a declaration of the parity of the two languages to be used by the Norwegian state in its dealings with the EU and not necessarily applicable to EU institutions.⁷⁶ This created an advantage for translators with particular knowledge of Nynorsk, and the EU Directorate-General for Translation began the recruitment process for Norwegian translators and interpreters early in 1994, as there were only a few weeks between the November referendum and the planned accession date of 1 January 1995.⁷⁷ Tove Nordahl from Ghent University also began giving lessons on Norwegian dialects to six EU interpreters working into other languages as early as November 1993, which included listening to the dialects

⁷⁴ Bjarne Slapgard, 'EEC-medlemskap – meir avnorsking', *SENTRUM og periferi*, 1.2 (1971), 32-33 (p. 32).

⁷⁵ Kulturdepartementet, *Norsk språk i EF og EØS* ([Oslo]: Kulturdepartementet, [1994]), p. 48.

⁷⁶ Geirr Wiggen, 'Norsk språk innenfor EU', *Dagbladet*, 6 May 1994, p. 30.

⁷⁷ Marte Mona, 'Brussel lokkar', *Dag og Tid*, 2 June 1994, p. 7.

spoken by ministers such as the northern Norwegian Jan Henry T. Olsen, and reading Nynorsk literature including works by Tarjei Vesaas.⁷⁸

52.2% of Norwegian voters rejected EU membership in the referendum on November 1994, with 47.8% voting to join, on an overall turnout of 89.0%. Once again, Oslo and its surrounding counties (this time Akershus, Buskerud, Vestfold and Østfold) were the only counties with a majority vote in favour. Again, the three northernmost counties voted most strongly against membership, followed this time not by Møre og Romsdal but by Sogn og Fjordane, another 'core' Nynorsk county.

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SVARKUPONG

Innrykket av Statens informasjonstjeneste A-56/94

Figure 6.5 When the Ministry of Foreign Affairs printed an advertisement for 'Information about Norway and the EU' in the Eurosceptic Nynorsk newspaper *Dag og Tid*, this advertisement was in Bokmål, although there is a box that can be ticked to select whether to receive a short version of the Storting report in Bokmål, Nynorsk or Sámi. The brochure 'Spørsmål og svar om Norge og EU' ('Questions and Answers about Norway and the EU') seems to be available only in Bokmål. *Dag og Tid*, 6 October 1994, p. 16.

⁷⁸ Ingrid Thorbjørnsrud, 'Norsktimar for EU-tolkar', *Dag og Tid*, 9 June 1994, p. 6.

As a result of the Norwegian rejection of EU membership, Norway instead became part of the European Economic Area (EEA), which includes all EU member states and non-members Iceland (although Iceland applied to join the EU in 2009), Liechtenstein and Norway. The EEA allows these three non-members to participate in the single market even though they are not full EU members, on the proviso that they accept and adopt all EU legislation on the single market. As they are not part of the EU, they do not have an input in the decision-making process for this legislation, and the Norwegian language is therefore not used officially by the EU. Inge Lønning, of the Norwegian European Movement, had pointed out that this meant the Norwegian language would be stronger in the EU than in the EEA.⁷⁹ The EU, in the meantime, has proven itself to be extremely committed to multilingualism and to language equality, still standing by the maintenance of all its official languages after the fifth enlargement of 2004 and 2007, and even creating the post of a Commissioner for Multilingualism (2007-2010), although that role has now been subsumed into the portfolio of the Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth. Irish was also added as an official working language in 2007. Furthermore, the EU provides funding for many initiatives related to multilingualism, including the Mercator European Network of Language Diversity Centres.

Norwegian nationalism had experienced a considerable boost in February 1994 in connection with the XVII Olympic Winter Games, which were held in Lillehammer. Although it is difficult to say whether this had an impact on the EU referendum later that year, it did also engage the efforts of the Nynorsk movement. The Lillehammer Olympic Organising Committee (LOOC) ensured there were some Nynorsk elements to its cultural programme, but Nynorsk was not put on an equal footing at an organisational level:

⁷⁹ Cited in Lars Aarønæs, 'Mål og makt i EU', *Dag og Tid*, 27 January 1994, p. 5.

Det har aldri vært aktuelt eller noe krav fra Kulturdepartementets side å sidestille bokmål og nynorsk som administrasjonsspråk i LOOC eller senere også Lillehammer-OL.

Det ville hatt store konsekvenser for rekruttering og administrative rutiner.

Lillehammer OL '94 AS er finansiert av Staten. Formelt er Lillehammer-OL likevel et aksjeselskap med Staten, Lillehammer kommune og Norges Olympiske Komite som eiere.⁸⁰

It has never been a current issue neither has there been any requirement from the Ministry of Culture to put Bokmål and Nynorsk on an equal footing as administrative languages in LOOC or, later, in Lillehammer-OL [*Olympiske leker* (Olympic Games)].

That would have had major consequences for recruitment and administrative routines.

Lillehammer OL '94 AS is financed by the State. Formally, however, Lillehammer-OL is a limited company owned by the State, the Municipality of Lillehammer and the Norwegian Olympic Committee.

When it became clear during preparations that signage for the games would be in Bokmål and in English, eight Norwegian professors wrote to the organising committee to express their dissatisfaction that this did not reflect the Norwegian language situation, with considerable weight given to the fact that Catalan had been an official language of the 1992 Summer Olympic Games in Barcelona.⁸¹ Minister of Culture Åse Kleveland later announced that Nynorsk would be used at the games in, for example, a brochure and a newspaper that were planned.⁸² When Lillehammer municipal authorities produced a schoolbook on the Olympics, *OL på hjemmebane*, to be sent free of charge to all schools in the country, it was produced only in Bokmål, against pupils' rights to have material available in their own form

⁸⁰ Aage Einhaug, letter from information director for Lillehammer OL '94 AS to Noregs Mållag, 3 July 1992; Oslo, Noregs Mållag (privatarkiv), 426 Engelsk i norsk – OL94 Lillehammer.

⁸¹ Arnhild Skre, 'Kor mange språk har vi', *Dag og Tid*, 4 March 1993, p. 2.

⁸² *Dag og Tid*, 'Åse ordnar litt OL-nynorsk', 19 August 1993, p. 8.

of Norwegian. Kåre Skadberg of Norsk språkråd (the Norwegian Language Council, the successor to Norsk språknemnd) complained that the Ministry of Education should have blocked this publication.⁸³ Nynorsk was, however, used in the opening ceremony, when Sissel Kyrkjebø sang the Olympic Hymn in Nynorsk, translated by Halldis Moren Vesaas.⁸⁴

6.9 The language question resolved or an eternal struggle?

In recent years, there have been further attempts to depoliticise the language struggle. In 2008, the Storting published the white paper *Mål og mening: Ein heilskapleg norsk språkpolitikk*, outlining future plans for state language policy.⁸⁵ The title of this document is a play on words; *mål* can mean, among other things, both 'language(s)' and 'aim(s)', while *mening* can denote both 'meaning' and 'intention'. The white paper places much emphasis on notions of hegemony, in spite of the relatively low profile of Gramscian theory in current Scandinavian research. The document explains the concept of hegemony as a mechanism of linguistic and cultural power, illustrating this with an example of a typical instance of the hegemony of Bokmål as a written language:

Å ha hegemoniet inneber å kunna seie kva som blir rekna som normalt. Uttrykket 'norsk og nynorsk' kan vera ei forsnakking, men er for mange det opplagde uttrykket for 'bokmål og nynorsk' fordi bokmål er det normale for dei og dermed berre eit anna ord for norsk.⁸⁶

To have the hegemony implies being able to determine what is considered normal. The expression 'Norwegian and Nynorsk' may

⁸³ Kåre Skadberg, 'OL på bokmålsbane', *Dag og Tid*, 18 November 1993, p. 20.

⁸⁴ Norges Olympiske Museum, 'Den olympiske hymne', <<http://www.maihaugen.no/no/Norges-Olympiske-Museum/OL-symboler/Den-olympiske-hymne/>> [accessed 13 January 2011].

⁸⁵ Det kongelige kultur- og kyrkjedepartement, *Mål og mening: Ein heilskapleg norsk språkpolitikk*, St.meld. nr. 35 (2007-2008).

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

be a slip of the tongue, but for many people it is the obvious way of expressing 'Bokmål and Nynorsk', because Bokmål is normal for them and therefore just another word for Norwegian.

The official position taken in *Mål og mening* has been generally well received for expressing the aims of supporting Norwegian as a complete language capable of sustaining Norwegian society and of defending Norwegian generally against the hegemony of English, while keeping both official standards of Norwegian and defending Nynorsk within the national context. The linguist Helge Sandøy has been particularly approving of the inclusion of the perspective on hegemony, but he has lamented that the policy's attention is reserved exclusively for institutionalised languages: the hegemony of Norwegian *vis à vis* the Sámi languages, the status of Bokmål relative to Nynorsk and the domination of English with respect to Norwegian.⁸⁷ Sandøy notes that there are also hegemonic dynamics within the standard languages and that radical Bokmål, for example, can sometimes come across as even more provocative than Nynorsk. If a writer or a journalist writes Bokmål using many diphthongs (writing words such as *lauv* instead of *løv* (leaf)) or with many *-a* endings (*adresa* instead of *adressen* (the address)), these features are often censored by certain publishers or by editors in the country's main newspapers. These word forms, which are allowed in the flexible rules for standard Bokmål, are characteristic of Samnorsk, which was officially abandoned as an aim by the government in 2002. Sandøy therefore predicts that Nynorsk will lose ground in the long term if official language policy continues to ignore the potential plurality within the official standard languages.

⁸⁷ Helge Sandøy, 'Utan samnorsk: Språklig avpolitisering', *Dag og Tid*, 13 February 2009, p. 25.

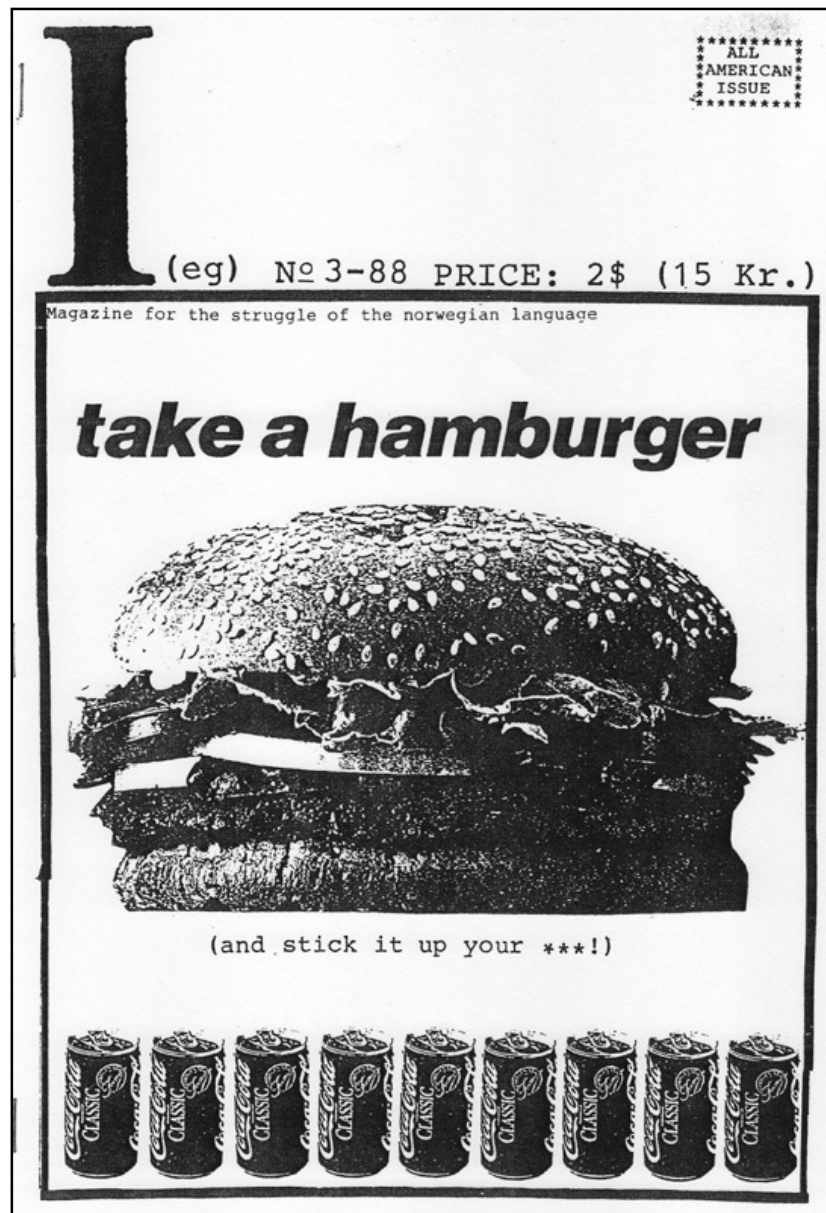


Figure 6.6 The campaign against the Anglo-Americanisation of Norwegian language and culture was expressed in succinct fashion, and with a touch of sarcasm, on the front cover of the magazine of Norsk Målungdom, *Eg*, 4.3 (1988).

In spite of its abandonment by the government, Samnorsk lives on as an unofficial project, especially with the organisation Landslaget for Språklig Samling (National Association for Linguistic Unification), which promotes radical forms of the official standards, especially radical Bokmål, rooted in popular spoken language. The scope that the official Bokmål standard allows for radical word forms is often overlooked by users of

Bokmål: in one study, Pål Styrk Hansen found that if school pupils were asked to correct a text written in radical Bokmål, approximately 40% of radical spellings were corrected.⁸⁸

On the basis of the *Mål og mening* report, Riksmålsforbundet has offered to co-operate more closely with Noregs Mållag on matters of mutual interest, presumably mainly the struggle for Norwegian against English.⁸⁹ Notwithstanding such attempts to depoliticise the language question over the past decades, Nynorsk still maintains strong political connotations. Norsk Monitor opinion poll data analysed by Ottar Hellevik has shown a statistical connection between preferring to read Nynorsk and an anti-EU viewpoint as well as between a preference for Nynorsk and membership of the other traditional counter-cultures, namely teetotalism and the free church movement.⁹⁰ Hellevik also found a correlation between the use of Nynorsk and the self-definition of respondents as traditional (instead of modern), idealistic (instead of materialistic) and radical (as opposed to conservative).⁹¹ Investigation of the voting tendencies of Nynorsk users also showed that they were much more likely than Bokmål users to vote for the centrist parties Senterpartiet (Centre Party), Kristeleg Folkeparti (Christian Democratic Party) and Venstre. They were also less likely than Bokmål users to vote for Arbeidarpartiet or the right-wing parties Høgre and Framstegspartiet (Progress Party – FrP). Nynorsk users living outside the Nynorsk

⁸⁸ Pål Styrk Hansen, 'Hvor blei det av det radikale bokmålet?', in *Femti år for folkemålet: Utvalgte artikler fra bladet Språklig Samling*, ed. by Pål Styrk Hansen and others ([Oslo]: Landslaget for språklig samling, 2009), pp. 316-327 (p. 319).

⁸⁹ *Bergens Tidende*, 'Språklig forbrødring', 5 October 2009, p. 2.

⁹⁰ Ottar Hellevik, 'Nynorskbrukaren – kven er han?', in *Kampen for språket: Nynorsken mellom det lokale og det globale*, ed. by Elisabeth Bakke and Håvard Teigen (Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget, 2001), pp. 117-139 (p. 121).

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

heartland were also more likely to vote for the left-wing parties Raud Valallianse (Red Electoral Alliance) and SV.⁹²

For Kjartan Fløgstad, in Habermasian terms,⁹³ Nynorsk is a representation of the *Lebenswelt* (lifeworld) as opposed to the *Systemwelt* (systems world) and is therefore 'symbolisk lada med motstand' ('symbolically charged with resistance').⁹⁴ Writing in Nynorsk is not the default option and is an action intrinsically charged with ideology and political meaning. But instead of being a struggle for identity or for equality, Fløgstad believes that the struggle for Nynorsk is one for diversity, and that it is the very expression of difference in the otherwise homogeneous Norwegian society.⁹⁵ Furthermore, it is also a struggle for the sake of resistance:

Målet er heller ikkje å utsletta systemfornufta og dei språklege formlane som gjer at livet i eit utvikla industriland kan sviva rundt. [...] Dette tyder igjen at målstriden ikkje kan vinnast. Den er vunnen. Den kan berre haldast ved lag. Målet er nådd. Striden er sjølve triumfen. Om nynorsken, slik den er i dag, skulle utropast som vinnar, er målstriden like mykje tapt som om nynorsken taper.⁹⁶

The aim is not to eradicate the reason of the system or the linguistic formulas that make life turn round in a developed industrial country. [...] This also means that the language struggle cannot be won. It has been won. It can only be kept going. The aim has been reached. The struggle is the triumph itself. If Nynorsk, as it is today, were to be declared the winner, the language struggle would be just as lost as if Nynorsk had lost.

⁹² Ibid., pp. 126-129.

⁹³ Jürgen Habermas, *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns*, 2 vols (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1981).

⁹⁴ Kjartan Fløgstad, 'Målet er maratonløpet – ikkje å komma i mål', *Mål og makt*, 14.3 (1984), 2-15 (p. 13).

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 15.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 14.

The ideology of Nynorsk is one of solidarity and of cultural resistance. According to the current set-up of the western world, it may be that, in order ever to achieve linguistic hegemony, Nynorsk would have to lose its identity and the associations with those ideals in order to become a language less charged with principles and conviction. Due to the philosophy of the movement, however, Nynorsk is practically obliged to remain the minority standard. According to this view, remaining the minority standard is the objective itself.

By contrast, Bokmål, as the hegemonic language, is frequently perceived to be neutral, pragmatic or common-sensical, at least by its own users. Berge Furre describes three types of so-called '*nøytralitet*' ('neutrality') frequently cited by various institutions of power reflecting the hegemony of the more widely used written standard.

Nøytralitet 1: 'Vi er språkleg nøytrale. Vi brukar berre bokmål i vår institusjon, bedrift, organisasjon. Vi prøver ikkje å tvinga vårt mål på andre – dei skal heller ikkje tvinga sitt på oss. Difor er vi nøytrale.'⁹⁷

Neutrality 1: 'We are linguistically neutral. We just use Bokmål in our institution, company or organisation. We are not trying to force our language on others – neither should they force theirs on us. Therefore we are neutral.'

Just as Furre indicated in 1971, this type of 'neutrality' is still widespread today in secondary and tertiary businesses, including newspapers (see below).⁹⁸ It is also the same justification that is very common for nationwide companies using Bokmål in the linguistic landscape (see 6.12 below).

⁹⁷ Furre, p. 40.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

Nøytralitet 2: 'Vi er nøytrale. Vi brukar berre bokmål fordi vi held til i Oslo, og her kan ikkje folk anna enn bokmål. Hadde vi halde til på Voss...' ⁹⁹

Neutrality 2: 'We are neutral. We just use Bokmål because we are based in Oslo, and people only know Bokmål here. If we had been in Voss [in western Norway]...'

This second kind of 'neutral' stance, according to Furre, is common in national organisations such as trade unions. This viewpoint is clearly strongly connected to centralisation, whereby only the language practices of the capital really count.

Nøytralitet 3[: ...] 'Vi er nøytrale. Altså brukar vi *mest bokmål* fordi det er mest bokmål her i landet.'

Neutrality 3[: ...] 'We are neutral. So we *mostly use Bokmål* because it is mostly Bokmål that is used in this country.'

The third form of 'neutrality' is common even with organisations in which most members have Nynorsk as their first written language. The connotations of Bokmål as a 'neutral' language, as a direct synonym for Norwegian in the eyes of many, and therefore the hegemonic language, and the status of Nynorsk as the counter-hegemonic language, mean that the language question has always been a political question.¹⁰⁰ Therefore the struggle cannot be permanently depoliticised; just as in Italy, every time the language question arises, other issues also come to the fore (see 2.2 above).

Språkrådet (the Language Council [of Norway], the successor to Norsk språkråd) apparently realises the benefit of lively debate about the Norwegian language as a force keeping alive the interest in Norwegian. According to Magni Øvrebotten, the chair of the Språkrådet's board, the director of Språkrådet should be someone who keeps the language

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 41.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 46.

debate open and alive.¹⁰¹ The former director, Sylfest Lomheim, certainly achieved that aim. Lomheim questioned the future of the Norwegian language and wondered whether it would still exist in centuries to come, with the hegemonic pressure from English.¹⁰² Most linguists have taken a more optimistic view.¹⁰³ There is, however, a strong trend towards domain loss, especially in the academic sphere.¹⁰⁴ Nevertheless, Lomheim's stark projections, together with his high media profile, have raised awareness of the potential problems caused by the use of English in Norway and have ensured that the Norwegian language question remains a topical issue on which most Norwegians have clear opinions.

6.10 Recent trends in language discrimination

Norway is frequently ranked as the country with the highest per capita rate of newspaper circulation in the world. The Norwegian Government awards approximately 300 million kroner each year in direct subsidies to around 140 newspapers, with the intention of keeping newspapers in business, allowing for greater freedom of speech. Furthermore, newspaper companies have been made exempt from paying value added tax. All the national daily newspapers, however, usually use only Bokmål, especially in their standard news articles. This led to calls for the rules regarding subsidies to be changed in order to require newspapers receiving subsidies to allow those journalists who wish to do so to write in

¹⁰¹ Cited in Ottar Fyllingsnes, 'Språkråd utan direktør', *Dag og Tid*, 20 August 2010, p. 16.

¹⁰² Sylfest Lomheim, 'Kamp i all æve?', in *Kampen for språket: Nynorsken mellom det lokale og det globale*, ed. by Elisabeth Bakke and Håvard Teigen (Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget, 2001), pp. 216-235.

¹⁰³ Brit Mæhlum, '"Om hundre år er allting glemt." Når pseudovitenskap får lov til å prege den språkpolitiske agendaen', *Norsk lingvistisk tidsskrift*, 20 (2002), 177-199.

¹⁰⁴ Tove Bull, 'Engelsk som lingua academica. Er norsk språk tapt for academia – og academia for sivilsamfunnet?', in *Å sjå samfunnet gjennom språket: Heiderskrift til Helge Sandøy på 60-årsdagen 14.06.2007*, ed. by Gunnstein Akselberg and Johan Myking (Oslo: Novus forlag, 2007), pp. 44-51.

Nynorsk, and potentially to move towards achieving a certain quota of Nynorsk text.¹⁰⁵ Such a quota already exists for state television and radio, which must broadcast 25% in Nynorsk, even though it is rare for them to achieve this target. The privately owned television channel TV2 is also required to use both Bokmål and Nynorsk, but without any stipulation for a specific percentage.

In November 2010, Norsk Målungdom launched its latest campaign to encourage the national newspapers to use Nynorsk. The organisation set up an alternative online service that automatically translated the websites of *Dagbladet* and *VG* into Nynorsk. The newspaper editors reacted angrily to this, claiming it was copyright theft, and the unofficial Nynorsk version of *Dagbladet* was soon shut down. The fact that the translations are provided automatically does mean that there are many inaccuracies in the text, but Norsk Målungdom has stressed that the point of the campaign is primarily to show the movement's dissatisfaction with the editorial ban on Nynorsk.¹⁰⁶

Some literary publishers also prefer Bokmål to Nynorsk. When translator Turid Farbregd was commissioned to translate Finnish-Estonian author Sofi Oksanen's novel *Puhdistus* (*Purge*, 2008), she was asked by the publisher to translate it into Bokmål, although Nynorsk is her main language. The publisher in question was Oktober: the same company that at least one Marxist-Leninist had tried to persuade in the 1970s to publish equally in Bokmål and Nynorsk (see 6.6 above). It was apparently mainly an issue of maximising the book's audience reach, although the translator claimed that one editor had once told her that '*å setja om til nynorsk er å drepa litteraturen*' ('to translate into Nynorsk kills literature').¹⁰⁷ Det

¹⁰⁵ Tor Fuglevik, 'Statsstøtta diskriminering', *Dagens næringsliv*, 15 January 2009.

¹⁰⁶ Norsk Målungdom, 'Opphev nynorskforbudet i *Dagbladet* og *VG*!' <<http://malungdom.no/politikk/nynorsk-i-nettavisene/>> [accessed 13 January 2011].

¹⁰⁷ Cecilie N. Seiness, 'Krav om bokmål', *Dag og Tid*, 26 June 2009, pp. 14-15.

Norske Samlaget, the main Nynorsk publisher, has on the other hand had great success with Nynorsk translations, by Tove Bakke, of French author Anna Gavalda's works.¹⁰⁸

The tabloid newspaper VG published its first main news article in Nynorsk in a long time – at least for as long as the editor could remember – on 12 January 2011: an article about a committee in the Directorate for Education and Training that is proposing to remove the *sidemål* (secondary language) exam in upper secondary school. The editor, Bernt Olufsen, claimed this was not the start of a new editorial policy, though, and that they planned to continue their language policy of mainly using moderate Bokmål.¹⁰⁹

The issue of *sidemål* education is especially contentious among some young people. Every school pupil has a *hovudmål* (main language), which is either Bokmål or Nynorsk. At secondary school, they must learn their *sidemål* as well, which is the other language form: for most school pupils, Nynorsk. Some mainstream right-wing political parties have won support among young people by suggesting plans to remove *sidemål* as a compulsory element of secondary education. Foremost among these parties is Høyre and its youth wing Unge Høyre. In the early 2000s, the Oslo branch of Unge Høyre made a poster drawing on classic ideas of Nynorsk as a rural language, showing a picture of a cow. The text on the poster, however, was particularly controversial, suggesting that Nynorsk users are on a lower social or evolutionary plane compared to Bokmål users, especially compared to those who vote for Høyre: '*la dem raute nynorsk; [bare vi slipper]*' ('let them moo Nynorsk; [as long as we don't have to]', brackets in original).

In 2005, the Unge Høyre branch in Hordaland made a campaign video that allegedly showed a socialist standing in an industrial area proclaiming that he wanted to force all

¹⁰⁸ Ottar Fyllingsnes, 'Ord-oskeladden', *Dag og Tid*, 26 June 2009, pp. 18-19.

¹⁰⁹ Cited in Karin Rykkje, 'VG skriv nynorsk', *Sunnmørsposten*, 12 January 2011 <<http://www.smp.no/nyheter/article298821.ece>> [accessed 13 January 2011].

school pupils to learn their *sidemål*. A member of Unge Høyre, parliamentary candidate Harald Victor Hove, then entered the scene holding a copy of a Nynorsk dictionary. Saying '*Dette er sidemålet mitt*' ('This is my *sidemål*'), he threw the dictionary into a burning barrel. When this video became public knowledge, Unge Høyre withdrew it, and it was never shown in public. Hove later claimed that it '*kunne like godt ha vært en søppelkasse*' ('might as well have been a dustbin') into which he threw the book.¹¹⁰

Commenting on similar incidents, mainly in Oslo, Fløgstad has asserted that in the Norwegian language question '*er det utvikla ein diskurs der diskriminerande skjellsord ikkje berre kan seiast offentleg, men får applaus og sakleg tyngd*' ('a discourse has developed in which discriminatory words of abuse can not only be pronounced in public, but are applauded and are given objective weight').¹¹¹ As a further example of the hegemonic disdain towards Nynorsk and, in spite of the dialect wave, still disdain towards dialects in some circles, Fløgstad cites Janne Rønningen, a television presenter:

Når Michael Jackson har klart å kvitte seg med masse farge og en halv nese, så må du i det minste kunne slutte å si 'Eg'. Når man snakker dialect, så er det ingen som hører etter hva du sier likevel. Forståelig nok. Hvem har lyst til å være venner med en *bondetamp*? Ikke jeg i hvert fall. Det er jo en grunn til at jeg flyttet til byen.¹¹²

If Michael Jackson has managed to get rid of all that colour [sic] and half of his nose, then you must at least be able to stop saying 'Eg' [the first person singular pronoun in Nynorsk]. When you speak dialect, there's nobody who'll listen to what you say anyway. Quite understandably. Who wants to be friends with a *bondetamp* [a normally contemptuous expression for a rural dweller, similar to 'country bumpkin' or 'teuchter']? Not me anyway. After all, that's one reason why I moved to the city.

¹¹⁰ Kristin Grøntoft, 'Brenner nynorsk-bok i tønne', *Dagbladet*, 17 August 2005 <<http://www.dagbladet.no/nyheter/2005/08/17/440490.html>> [accessed 13 January 2011].

¹¹¹ Fløgstad, *Brennbart*, p. 87.

¹¹² Interviewed in *Aften*, 3 November 2000, cited in Fløgstad, *Brennbart*, p. 88.

In the general elections of 2009, a new party ran called Ett (skrift)språk (One (Written) Language). The only campaign issue of this party was to abolish *sidemål* in upper secondary schools. The party only stood in Akershus county, where the secondary language of most pupils is Nynorsk, although its founder, Einar Smørdal, is a retired school teacher originally from Volda, a 'core' Nynorsk municipality.¹¹³ Smørdal also runs a freelance business named Nynorsk Språkråd (Nynorsk Language Council), offering translation services between Bokmål and Nynorsk and vice versa. The other eighteen candidates the party put forward were mainly born in 1990 or 1991.¹¹⁴ Ett (skrift)språk received 103 votes.

Far from being a fringe issue, the *sidemål* exam could be seen as the most essential part of what Fløgstad calls '*kulturforliket*' ('the cultural compromise'):

Sjølvs om den ofte har verka fiktiv, har føresetnaden heile tida vore at vi for det første har to jamstilte språkformer i landet, og for det andre at alle kan begge målformer. Godtakinga av denne fiksjonen har vore eit norsk dannelseskriterium.¹¹⁵

Even if it has often seemed fictitious, the assumption has always been firstly that we have two language forms in this country, on an equal footing, and secondly that everyone knows both forms. Acceptance of this fiction has been a Norwegian cultural criterium.

The *sidemål* exam is, then, what determines acceptance of the fiction; or, alternatively, turns fiction into fact. If Norway can be seen as a consociational democracy, it is this exam that holds it together.

¹¹³ Lars Lier, 'Lærer starter nytt parti mot nynorsk', *Romerikes Blad*, 1 April 2009 <http://www.rb.no/lokale_nyheter/article4238126.ece> [accessed 13 January 2011].

¹¹⁴ TV2, 'Stortingskandidater for Ett (skrift)språk' <<http://www.tv2nyhetene.no/valg09/velgerguiden/fylke/akershus/sprk/>> [accessed 13 January 2011].

¹¹⁵ Fløgstad, *Brennbart*, p. 16.

6.11 The campaign for the Norwegianisation of place-names

As has already been shown with reference to Italy (see 4.4.5 above), if notions of hegemony and counter-hegemony, centre and periphery are applied to specific contexts of language conflict or struggle, in many linguistic or cultural wars of position a key part is played by the politics of place-names.

Especially among population segments that support the *status quo* of power relations, as well as in societies that are characterized by a high level of cultural entente, it is well possible that the hegemonic toponymies acquire – as a part and parcel of people's intuitive 'common sense' – a largely taken-for-granted status. Conversely, in cases where socio-cultural tensions are paramount, toponymic struggles may surface in a variety of everyday forms: from organized re-naming campaigns to the spontaneous use of alternative names and pronunciations, grouses against the renditions of history in official toponymies, refusals to unlearn marginalized names, and so on.¹¹⁶

These toponymic struggles may include coining new names or promoting alternative names, sometimes names that were in use in an earlier period. All these changes to place-names will usually aim to change, more broadly, perceptions of the places in question. The act of naming may also be an attempt to change what was previously just an abstract space into a recognisable and familiar place. To give a familiar example, the increasingly common practice to refer to New Zealand as *Aotearoa/New Zealand* or *Aotearoa New Zealand* could be seen as part of a post-colonial war of position to afford more equal respect to Māori and to New Zealanders of European descent. Some may see this as a different place, a newer New Zealand, in opposition to 'a masculinist colonialism and colonial history'.¹¹⁷ When Saddam

¹¹⁶ Jani Vuolteenaho and Lawrence D. Berg, 'Towards Critical Toponymies', in *Critical Toponymies: The Contested Politics of Place-Naming*, ed. by Lawrence D. Berg and Jani Vuolteenaho (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 1-18 (p. 11).

¹¹⁷ Lawrence D. Berg and Robin A. Kearns, 'Naming as Norming: "Race," Gender and the Identity Politics of Naming Places in Aotearoa/New Zealand', in *Critical Toponymies: The*

Hussein International Airport was renamed Baghdad International Airport as a result of a very real war of manoeuvre, the new name also announced political change.¹¹⁸

Laura Kostanski has proposed the existence of 'toponymic attachment' as a distinct construct, related to place attachment and composed of toponymic identity and toponymic dependence.¹¹⁹ Through the links between place-naming and sense of place, place-names come to play an important role in the identity connected to a place, and people become dependent on the use of a place-name to relate to a place as they perceive it. As a result, proposals to change names can meet considerable resistance and consternation among certain parts of a population, and these attitudes to place-names and to the processes of place-(re)naming can reveal much about the dynamics of power, as the (re)naming process is frequently led by hegemonic or counter-hegemonic forces.

The Norwegianisation of Danish place-names, or of what could be called 'less Norwegian' place-names, has played a significant role in the Norwegian language struggle. Perhaps the best known examples of the Norwegianisation of place-names are the changing of the names of certain large centres of population in Norway where the names had been Danicised during the period of Danish influence. The name of the capital of Norway was changed from *Kristiania* to *Oslo* between 1924 and 1925. The Danish name, which had been spelt *Christiania* until the end of the nineteenth century, had its roots in the fact that the old city of Oslo burnt down in 1624. King Christian IV of Denmark and Norway decided that,

Contested Politics of Place-Naming, ed. by Lawrence D. Berg and Jani Vuolteenaho (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 19-51 (p. 45).

¹¹⁸ Krystian Woznicki, 'Saddam International Airport/Baghdad International Airport: The Airport as a Symbol and Elementary Unit of (Neo)-Imperial World Land Development', trans. by Timothy Jones, *Springerlin*, 2 (2003) <<http://www.springerlin.at/dyn/heft.php?id=35&pos=0&textid=0&lang=en>> [accessed 13 January 2011].

¹¹⁹ Laura Kostanski, '“What's in a Name?": Place and Toponymic Attachment, Identity and Dependence. A Case Study of the Grampians (Gariwerd) National Park Name Restoration Process' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Ballarat, 2009).

instead of rebuilding the old city on top of the ruins, a new town would be built adjacent to the old city and would follow new European urban design with grid-pattern streets. The name Oslo lived on in the meantime as an alternative name for *Gamlebyen*, the old town that had been largely destroyed by fire. Following the end of Danish rule, a sentiment began to grow among some that the name of the city should be changed.¹²⁰

Name changes and the Nynorsk movement are closely connected. Ivar Aasen had already expressed his desire in the 1860s for the name *Oslo* to be reinstated.¹²¹ From the early twentieth century, the standardisation of place-names tended to gravitate towards Landsmål, as it was then, as the arguably more 'national' form of Norwegian. Even though the name *Oslo* in itself did not really present any major standardisation problems, the standardisation of the Norwegian toponymicon in general came to be seen as part of the drive to make Norway 'more Norwegian' or 'more Nynorsk'.¹²²

In Oslo, the individual actors who fought for the name change were the same who were fighting for Landsmål, and those who militated against the name change were the same people who were fighting for Riksmål. Apart from the nationalistic argument that *Oslo* was 'more Norwegian', there also was an important class dimension to the name change. As neither Høgre nor Venstre held a majority in either the city council or the Norwegian parliament, it was up to Arbeidarpartiet to decide the outcome. Oslo both referred primarily to an area that lay on the working-class east end of the city and was at the same time a name used more readily by the people of the east end. Perhaps as a result of this, Arbeidarpartiet representatives voted overwhelmingly in favour of the change. The counter-hegemonic struggle for *Oslo* represented then perhaps one of the first recognitions of the political

¹²⁰ Sylfest Lomheim, *Språkreisa: Norsk gjennom to tusen år* ([Oslo]: Damm, 2007), pp. 330-331.

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 330.

¹²² Åse Wetås, *Namneskiftet Kristiania – Oslo* (Oslo: Novus forlag, 2000), pp. 174-175.

significance of differences between urban sociolects. One Arbeidarpartiet city councillor stated that:

[...] for hele den tid jeg kan mindes, helt fra for 50 aar siden, har kampen altid været mellem os som har villet ha 'Oslo', eller som har holdt paa 'kua' og 'beina' og 'lua', og de andre. Helt fra skoledagene har det været kamp mellem disse to, alle disse sønnene av borgere og embedsmænd selvfølgelig mot os paa østkanten, eller 'gutta', som vi kaldtes.¹²³

[...] for as long as I can remember, for all of 50 years, the struggle has always been between those of us who wanted to have 'Oslo', or who have held onto 'kua' and 'beina' and 'lua' [feminine definite nouns, 'the cow', 'the leg' and 'the cap', commonly used in certain Oslo dialects but relatively radical forms in Bokmål at the time], and the others. Ever since our school days, there has been a struggle between these two, all these sons of the bourgeois and civil functionaries against, of course, us on the east side, or 'the lads' as we are called.

Other name struggles have also been of importance to the Nynorsk movement as a counter-hegemonic project, supporting their claim as proponents of the more legitimate and representative national standard, for example the changes from *Trondhjem* to *Nidaros* and then to *Trondheim*,¹²⁴ or the proposed change from *Kristiansund* to *Fosna*.¹²⁵ Perhaps the best example, however, is the name of the country of Norway itself: in Bokmål *Norge*, and in Nynorsk *Noreg*. Until 1938, the form *Norge* was allowed in Nynorsk too, but when *Noreg* became the only form allowed in Nynorsk, it took on the status of a *faneord* (banner word), which instantly marks a text as Nynorsk and that is perceived to be of special importance in the standard in question. Unusually, while Nynorsk generally aims to be as close to Norwegian dialects as possible, *Noreg* is not found as a living form in any dialect apart from

¹²³ Cited in Wetås, p. 181.

¹²⁴ Oddmund Løkensgard Hoel, *Mål og modernisering 1868-1940*, Norsk målreising, 2 (Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget, 2011), pp. 402-415.

¹²⁵ Ola Stemshaug, *Stridane om bynamna Fosna-Kristiansund* (Oslo: Novus forlag, 1991).

normalised Nynorsk, and hence it is natural for many Nynorsk users to prefer *Norge* or other local dialectal forms of the name in speech, and even in writing. The etymology of the name is debatable, but the clear consensus is that it derives from **Norðr-vegr*, 'the road or sea-route to the north'.¹²⁶

Carl I. Hagen, the leader of the populist conservative FrP, launched an eventually unsuccessful proposal in parliament in 1986 to allow only the form *Norge* to be used officially.¹²⁷ His proposal was criticised heavily by a Høgre Storting representative, Hallgrim Berg, who is a Nynorsk user. Berg countered that Hagen would be going against his own liberal principles by seeking to ban the form *Noreg*, which Berg underlined was used more frequently in *Diplomatarium Norvegicum*, a large collection of medieval letters and documents. Berg suggested a new compromise form, **Norveg*, which would be historically correct, still relating to **Norð-vegr*. Berg claimed that **Norveg* would be '*sjølforklarande*' ('self-explanatory') and '*internasjonalt*' ('international'). It could also be pronounced '*Nårvei*', giving a pronunciation similar to the English *Norway* which, Berg said, should give Hagen the '*jappe-klang*' ('yuppie sound') that would be appropriate for the FrP.¹²⁸

The next year, a small new organisation called Bokmålsforeningen (the Bokmål Association) launched a campaign with as its first priority '*å fjerne betegnelsen Noreg fra offentlige papirer, penger og frimerker*' ('remove the term *Noreg* from public documents, money and stamps') (see figure 6.7 below), but this organisation did not appear to inspire much

¹²⁶ Lars S. Vikør, 'Landsnamnet vårt – ein gong til', in *Norsk stadnamnarkiv 75 år 1921-1996*, ed. by Tom Schmidt (Oslo: Universitetet i Oslo, Institutt for nordistikk og litteraturvitenskap, 1996), pp. 113-116 (p. 113).

¹²⁷ Carl I. Hagen, 'Forslag fra stortingsrepresentant Carl I. Hagen datert 24. mars 1986 om å be Regjeringen påse at navnet Norge benyttes på samtlige offentlige institusjoner og dokumenter', Dokument nr. 8:12 (1985-1986).

¹²⁸ Hallgrim Berg, 'Ordsiftet om Norge – Noreg, Stortinget 19. juni 1986'; Oslo, Noregs Mållag (privatarkiv), 425 Noreg/Norge.

support. In 1996, Norsk språkråd recommended that *Norge* be adopted in Nynorsk as a so-called *klammeform* (see 5.9 above), but this was rejected by the Ministry for Culture, under pressure from Noregs Mållag, mainly because of the special place this name occupies in the toponymicon.¹²⁹



NORGE - ingen tvil!

Bokmålsforeningen lanserer **Folkeaksjonen mot Noreg.** Den har flere målsettinger. Først og fremst ønsker vi å fjerne betegnelsen Noreg fra offentlige papirer, penger og frimerker. På lengre sikt ønsker vi ett skriftspråk i Norge, bokmål. Norge skal samles til ett språkrike. Norskopplæringen i skolen styrkes hvis elevene kan konsentrere seg om ett språk, norsk. Ja til dialekter, nei til konstruksjonen nynorsk.

Er du enig?
Meld deg inn! **Bokmålsforeningen**
Vakåsveien 9 - 1360 Nesbru - Telefon 79 60 30
Velkommen som medlem!

Figure 6.7 Propaganda for Bokmålsforeningen, with a sheep dressed in traditional Norwegian clothing as its symbol. This organisation tried to start a campaign against the Nynorsk spelling *Noreg* (Norway), as a first step towards making Bokmål the sole written standard of Norwegian. Oslo, Noregs Mållag (privatarkiv), 012 Styrepapir, Sakspapir 1986-31.12.88.

¹²⁹ Tiril Rem, '[Norge] ikkje godkjent', *Dag og Tid*, 30 May 1996, p. 23.

6.12 Evidence from the linguistic landscape

Since the Second World War, Nynorsk has declined in many parts of Norway, and it has become increasingly confined to western Norway, in what has come to be known as the Nynorsk *kjerneområde* ('core area'). Some have called this a Nynorsk Gaeltacht, in reference to the Irish-speaking parts of western Ireland.¹³⁰ The state authorities have also recognised this development by opening certain Nynorsk-specific institutions in western Norway, whereas in the past Oslo would have been preferred, namely the Nynorsk kultursentrum (Nynorsk Cultural Centre) in Ørsta, the Nasjonalt senter for nynorsk i opplæringa (National Centre for the Teaching of Nynorsk) in Volda and the Nynorsk mediesenter (Nynorsk Media Centre) in Førde. This is of course also part of the trend for decentralisation, for which the Nynorsk movement has been actively engaged in campaigning. It can, however, also have a negative effect on Nynorsk in that the language becomes less visible in the rest of the country.

The role of the linguistic landscape in the Lega Nord's dialect campaign has been explored (see 4.4.5 above). The linguistic landscape has not had quite the same status as a central battle aim – or battlefield – for the Nynorsk movement in Norway as it has for the Lega in Italy, although there was some concerted effort by Nordnorsk Målungdom (Northern Norwegian [Nynorsk] Language Association) to correct outdated or misspelt place-names on road signs in northern Norway. Between February 1979 and July 1982, in fact, Nordnorsk Målungdom took up ninety-five separate place-name cases with various authorities, in most instances based upon tip-offs from government-funded scholar Edvard Ruud. As well as road signs, they also made complaints regarding the spelling of place-names in telephone books, bus timetables, newspapers, television news programmes, and by

¹³⁰ Bjørg Nybø, 'Eit nynorsk "gaeltacht" på Vestlandet?', *Syn og segn*, 113.2 (2007), 40-49.

utility companies.¹³¹ The Sámi languages have also seen major linguistic landscape struggles in northern Norway.¹³² Although the linguistic landscape conflicts involving Nynorsk have not been quite as dramatic, data from the linguistic landscape can reveal much about the current situation of Nynorsk.

Place-names have been at the centre of the Lega's dialect campaign in northern Italy, and the same is also true of the Sámi linguistic landscape debate. The Nynorsk place-name debates have already been discussed above. This section will instead aim for a qualitative analysis of representative linguistic landscape items from two Nynorsk 'core' municipalities, Os and Volda. Os, in the county of Hordaland, is a key bastion for the Nynorsk language in the area, lying just to the south of the city of Bergen, where Bokmål dominates. Volda, in Møre og Romsdal county, is on the other hand surrounded by other Nynorsk municipalities and is home to a number of important Nynorsk institutions. Significantly, Ivar Aasen also grew up on the municipal boundary between Volda and Ørsta, and the Nynorsk kultursentrum mentioned above is built on the site of the farm where he was born. The fieldwork presented here was carried out in October 2009 (in Osøyro, the main settlement in the municipality of Os) and November 2009 (in Volda).

The first function of the linguistic landscape, as defined by Landry and Bourhis, is informational.¹³³ The use of a particular language on signs could determine the public's expectations regarding more general use of that language, for example it may suggest the right or the opportunity to use that language in communications with public institutions,

¹³¹ Nordnorsk Målungdom, 'Oppsummering av arbeidet med stadnamn i Nord-Noreg, perioden 1979-01.07.1982'; Oslo, Noregs Mållag (privatarkiv), 429 Stadnamn.

¹³² Guy Puzey, 'Opportunity or Threat? The Role of Minority Toponyms in the Linguistic Landscape', in *Names in Multi-Lingual, Multi-Cultural and Multi-Ethnic Contact: Proceedings of the 23rd International Congress of Onomastic Sciences*, ed. by Wolfgang Ahrens, Sheila Embleton and André Lapierre (Toronto: York University, 2009), pp. 821-827.

¹³³ Landry and Bourhis, pp. 25-26.

although this will not always be the case. The linguistic landscape can also contribute to indicating the boundaries of a linguistic region. The second function of the linguistic landscape is symbolic. If a certain language can be found in extensive use in the linguistic landscape, this can be interpreted as a symbol of that language's 'subjective ethnolinguistic vitality'.¹³⁴ Furthermore, while the linguistic landscape can reflect the sociolinguistic situation, it is also capable of manipulating an individual's judgment of the status of languages, either intentionally or unintentionally. This could then, in turn, potentially alter that individual's linguistic behaviour. The relationship between linguistic landscape and sociolinguistic context is therefore a 'bidirectional' one (Cenoz and Gorter 2006: 67).¹³⁵

Attention will be turned firstly to linguistic landscape items produced on behalf of and erected for democratically elected authorities in these municipalities that have declared their official written standard to be Nynorsk. It is clear that this is one area in which Nynorsk is well represented. The use of Nynorsk by the authorities is, after all, sanctioned and protected by the cultural compromise enshrined in the legal status of Nynorsk. The signs are fairly consistently in Nynorsk on municipal premises in Os and Volda, such as at the council headquarters, and also on road signs, with a few exceptions (see figures 6.8-6.9). Signs at other public institutions such as schools, hospitals and Volda University College are also generally in Nynorsk.

¹³⁴ Ibid., p. 27.

¹³⁵ Jasone Cenoz and Durk Gorter, 'Linguistic Landscape and Minority Languages', *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 3 (2006), 67-80 (p. 67).



Figures 6.8-6.9 'Official' linguistic landscape items in Os and Volda are quite consistently in Nynorsk. These two signs in Os, however, demonstrate that even in 'core' Nynorsk municipalities Bokmål does creep in. The no parking sign on the left features a Nynorsk plate stating 'Except for buses', but the sign on the right, found at the very same lay-by, is in Bokmål. This could conceivably be due to a lack of Nynorsk sign stock with the suppliers. Photographs by the author, October 2009.



Figure 6.10 The collection times notice on the postbox outside the main post office in Volda is entirely in Nynorsk. Photograph by the author, November 2009.



Figure 6.11 Although the sign on the postbox next to the post office entrance in Volda is in Nynorsk, the opening hours on the main door are given in Bokmål. Photograph by the author, November 2009.

Posten Norge AS is the publicly owned limited company that provides postal services in Norway. Since it became a limited company, its approach to language policy has become more laissez-faire, but the Ministry of Transport and Communications has encouraged it to

improve its standards.¹³⁶ The name of the company is in Bokmål, but it does print some stamps with the country's name in Nynorsk. Furthermore, it is required to make forms available in Nynorsk and to use at least 25% Nynorsk on its website, but these requirements are currently not being met.¹³⁷ The company's presence in linguistic landscape can be quite inconsistent, even in Nynorsk municipalities (see figures 6.10-6.11). Post offices are traditionally seen as 'top-down' institutions, but the move towards privatisation has made them less accountable or representative; Norwegian postal services were set to be liberalised on 1 January 2011, but this has currently been left pending.¹³⁸



Figures 6.12-6.13 The Church of Norway, officially the country's ultimate 'top-down' institution, is currently administered by the Ministry of Government Administration, Reform and Church Affairs, having previously been within the purview of the Ministry of Culture. It also uses Nynorsk fairly consistently in Nynorsk municipalities, with some minor variations. On the left is the older of these two signs outside the churchyard in Os, marking a parking space as 'Reserved for church officials' in Nynorsk. The newer sign on the right is in Nynorsk except for the final word ('officials'), which has been spelt in Bokmål. Photographs by the author, October 2009.

¹³⁶ Øyvind Lefdal Eidsvik, 'Skjerpar nynorskrava', *Bergens Tidende*, 26 June 2007 <<http://www.bt.no/nyheter/innenriks/Skjerpar-nynorskrava-374744.html>> [accessed 13 January 2011].

¹³⁷ *iTromsø*, 'Etterlyser nynorsken', 26 May 2009 <<http://www.itromso.no/nyheter/article261464.ece>> [accessed 13 January 2011].

¹³⁸ May Berg, 'Flere opphever postmonopolet', *Frifagbevegelse.no*, 11 January 2011 <<http://www.frifagbevegelse.no/arbeidslivet/internasjonalt/article5442696.ece>> [accessed 13 January 2011].



Figure 6.14 Statoil are known to have used Nynorsk signs in the past, but their main signs, such as this one at the Statoil petrol station in Industrigata in Volda, are now in Bokmål. The garage also had an advertising banner in Nynorsk with the text '*POLERINGSVASK beskyttar bilen din!!!*' ('POLISH WASH protects your car!!!'), although words with Low German prefixes such as '*beskyttar*' are often frowned upon in Nynorsk.¹³⁹ Photograph by the author, November 2009.

Statoil ASA is the world's largest offshore oil and gas company, in which the Norwegian state is the largest shareholder. In 2010, its retail division, responsible for petrol stations in Norway and in other countries (see figure 6.14) became a separate company, Statoil Fuel & Retail ASA, of which Statoil ASA remains the majority shareholder. Statoil recently announced that it was to ask its Norwegian sub-contractors to use English in written communication with the company. Due to Statoil's state connections, Språkrådet reminded it of the government's policy, as expressed in the *Mål og mening* report, that the

¹³⁹ Olaf Almenningen, *Innføring i nynorsk for høgare utdanning* (Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget, 2006), pp. 69-70.

position of the Norwegian language should be strengthened. Statoil backtracked, announcing that it would use Norwegian in Norway, but English will still be used when it is 'formålstjenlig' ('appropriate for the purpose').¹⁴⁰ The Americanisation of language in the North Sea oil industry has been seen as a problem by some since the beginning of the industry, but it has also played a role in building the identity of Norwegian oil workers.¹⁴¹



Figure 6.15 This picture is from a petrol station in Byvegen in Os belonging to another company, Best. The handwritten sign in Nynorsk, behind the rows of Coca-Cola bottles, reads 'You can fill your Statoil cup here', as free coffee is available for those with a Statoil travel mug. Photograph by the author, October 2009.

¹⁴⁰ Svein Arne Orvik, 'Statoil vil likevel bruke norsk', *Språknytt*, 38.3 (2010), 13.

¹⁴¹ Tone Guldbrandsen, *Med fireflaiten åffsjår: Norske oljearbeideres bruk av anglisimer* (Stavanger: Universitetsforlaget, 1985).



Figure 6.16 The livery of this company car parked outside the Volda office of a major national chain of estate agents features the company's name in Nynorsk, translatable as 'EstateAgent 1'. Most of the other signs on the building itself and in the shop windows are in Bokmål. Photograph by the author, November 2009.



Figure 6.17 A sign in the window at this clothes shop in Os tells the biography in Nynorsk of the old inhabitant of Os after whom the shop is named, followed by the opening hours in Bokmål. Photograph by the author, October 2009.



Figures 6.18-6.19 The window of a shoe-maker's shop in Hatvikvegen in Oslo features an especially eclectic assortment of language. 'Åpningstid' ('Opening time'), 'Lørdag' ('Saturday') and 'SKOMAKER!' ('SHOE-MAKER!') are in Bokmål, but 'Vekedager' ('Weekdays') is neither Bokmål nor Nynorsk; *veke-* is Nynorsk, but *-dager* is Bokmål. On the right is a detail from the poster in the window, reading 'Do you need a / Waterproofing-Wash??? / or Repairs for your boat hood / COME IN FOR A CHAT.' *Vaskimregnering* is misspelt and *ein* (*en* in Bokmål) is the only obviously Nynorsk word, even though it would be *ei* in Nynorsk as *vaskimpregnering* is an exclusively feminine noun in Nynorsk, permitted as either feminine or masculine in Bokmål. There are a number of identifiably Bokmål words, including 'dere' (*de* in Nynorsk) and 'reparasjoner' (*reparasjonar*). Photographs by the author, October 2009.



Figures 6.20-6.21 The signboard on the left, outside a fishmonger's shop in Oslo, offers 'freshly made *plukkfisk*', a traditional regional fish dish. The text is not identifiably Bokmål or Nynorsk; it could be correct in either standard. The word '*nylaga*' is, however, relatively radical in Bokmål, while it is unmarked in terms of its radicalness in Nynorsk. The signboard on the right for a special offer on smoked Greenland halibut also demonstrates the grey areas between the two standards. '*Tilbud*' ('special offer') is exclusively Bokmål, but '*røykt*' ('smoked') is acceptable in both standards, although it may be perceived as mildly radical by some users of Bokmål. Photographs by the author, October 2009.



Figures 6.22-6.23 It could be expected that the name of a workshop for *bunad*, traditional Norwegian folk dress, in Os would be in Nynorsk, as it is on the left. The word '*utvalg*' (*utval* in Nynorsk) in the text on the right, however, identifies that sign as Bokmål. Photographs by the author, October 2009.



Figure 6.24 This signboard, in the Spinneriet shopping centre in Volda, reads 'cool party / earrings / only: 99,- / b.young', showing the strong presence of English alongside Norwegian, in this case Nynorsk. In addition to '*party*' and '*b.young*', '*tøffe*' ('cool') is also derived from the English word *tough*. The sign also includes a split compound noun ('*party øreringar*' instead of *partyøreringar*), which is an increasingly common phenomenon in Norwegian, possibly influenced by English nominal structures, but often the only way to avoid this on signs is to use hyphens.¹⁴² Photograph by the author, November 2009.

¹⁴² Kristin Andvik Hoaas, 'Hvorfor skal vi bry oss med særskrivning?', *Språknytt*, 37.2 (2009), 23-25.



Figure 6.25 The Rema 1000 supermarket in Volda has put great effort into its Nynorsk signage, even when there is just one letter of difference between the standards: '*frosen*' ('frozen') is *frossen* in Bokmål. Photograph by the author, November 2009.



Figure 6.26 Volda's Rema 1000 was the first supermarket in this national chain to use Nynorsk signs, which were installed when the new supermarket was opened in 2006.¹⁴³ Photograph by the author, November 2009.

¹⁴³ Noregs Mållag, 'Nynorsk på Rema 1000!', 30 August 2008 <<http://www.nm.no/tekst.cfm?id=2204>> [accessed 13 January 2011].



Figures 6.27-6.28 There are some inconsistencies between the permanent and temporary signage around the shop: 'Kaffi' ('coffee') is Nynorsk while 'kaffe' is Bokmål. Photographs by the author, November 2009.

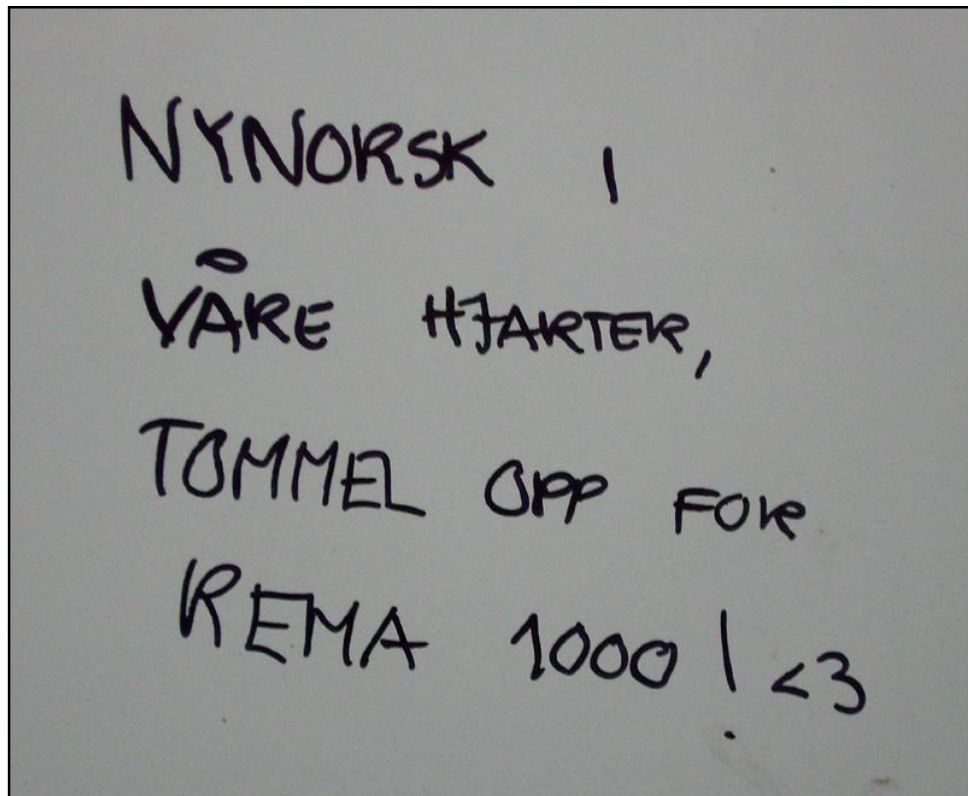


Figure 6.29 The use of Nynorsk on signs is clearly appreciated by the inhabitants of Volda. This graffiti outside the supermarket reads 'Nynorsk in our hearts, thumbs up for Rema 1000! <3'. The standard Nynorsk plural of *hjarte* (heart) is, however, not 'hjarter' but *hjarte* or *hjar**to*. Photograph by the author, November 2009.

The images above demonstrate that, even in 'core' Nynorsk municipalities, the hegemonic presence of Bokmål is still considerable and is certainly much more significant than the visibility of Nynorsk in predominantly Bokmål municipalities (see figure 5.1 in the previous chapter). The pressure of Bokmål is so great that it clearly leads to confusion among language users, often affecting the spelling on Nynorsk signs (see figures 6.13, 6.18-6.19). Indeed, the hegemony of Bokmål is highlighted by opinion poll data showing that, even in the 'core' Nynorsk municipalities of western Norway, only 45.3% of respondents reported that they preferred to read Nynorsk.¹⁴⁴ There is also a marked difference between the 'top-down' linguistic landscape, in which Nynorsk is better represented – albeit with occasional inconsistencies – and the 'bottom-up' linguistic landscape. There is, however, an even more striking difference between linguistic landscape items produced by locally based actors and those installed for commercial enterprises with a nationwide base. With notable exceptions (see figures 6.25-6.28), these are much more likely to subscribe to the theories of 'neutrality' outlined by Berge Furre (see 6.9 above).

¹⁴⁴ Hellevik, p. 119.

7 Conclusion

7.1 Wars of position in language policy

It has been the aim of this investigation to view as a whole the processes through which language policy, in its broadest sense, is constructed. This conclusion will synthesise the findings according to the three primary areas of enquiry (see 1.2 above) addressed throughout this study, before finally exploring the implications of these findings in terms of linguistic democracy achieved through an organic approach to language policy.

The first research question posed sought to explore the development of the current linguistic power structures of Italy and Norway. Combining Antonio Gramsci's robust methods and Stein Rokkan's nuanced sense for comparative political geography has proven a successful model for studying the history of language policy formation. The innovative application of this unified model to examine the complex wars of position surrounding the language questions of Italy and Norway in an expanded historical perspective has made it possible to trace the extended strands of power relations between hegemonic and subaltern forces that run through the histories of the major language debates in Italy and Norway and that are still manifested in the linguistic power structures of today.

Having observed in Chapter 3 and Chapter 5 how these forces shaped the language situation up to the dawn of the Cold War world order, the case studies presented in Chapter 4 and Chapter 6 discussed the fortunes of counter-hegemonic periphery-vs.-centre language movements in the last few decades. These showed that the language questions of Italy and Norway are not yet resolved, and the wars of position continue. The perpetuation of the language debates in these two countries is the greatest gain made by the counter-hegemonic

movements examined, typified especially by the Nynorsk movement's struggle for the sake of struggling (see 6.9). The linguistic awareness this creates marks the most fundamental stage of fostering positive language attitudes, in the sense that language is valued and linguistic diversity comes to the fore. Language is a social construct, however, so a proper evaluation of the meaning of these two activist programmes must take into account the wider social context.

In Italy, Manzoni's solution to the language question is too commonly seen as a decisive solution. It is true that Italy has obtained a unified language, and this is largely a product of education and the influence of the mass media, but just as the emergence of the Lega Nord on the political scene demonstrated the transient nature of what had appeared to be a permanent national political party structure, the Lega's willingness to engage in the language question through the appropriation of dialect activism has shown the potential for questions of language to mobilise new forces. This stands in contrast to the widespread, hegemonic myth in Italy, and in many other European countries, that questions of national language are settled and that the current political hierarchy of languages is static.

Norway, then, is an unusual case, as the hegemonic language planning project that was once Riksmål has not been considered a decisive solution. This is due to the existence of the two official written standards, and the endurance of the minority, counter-hegemonic standard Nynorsk, which owes much to the intense efforts of language activists over the years. The inspiration of those activists was, at first, predominantly nationalist, but the social argumentation – implicit in Ivar Aasen's solution based on primarily subaltern Norwegian dialects and carried forward by Halvdan Koht in both Nynorsk and radical Bokmål – was what drove the Nynorsk movement to participate in the post-1968 'dialect wave', at a time when there had been a futile official declaration of language peace. The current official line, which is that the two 'answers' to the language question should both remain, may serve to

calm the debate. Activists on opposite sides of the linguistic divide have gained more respect for each other in recent years, as they take on the challenge of continuing to value Norwegian as a whole in the face of the growing influence of English. One especially fruitful further application of the Gramscian-Rokkanian model presented here would indeed be to explore in greater detail the reactions among language activists and the wider public to the influence of English and to globalisation, in terms of language ideologies. While members of Norwegian language activist organisations may be working with a spirit of increased co-operation, though, there still remains a great degree of discrimination against Nynorsk in certain parts of wider society, generally inspired by a hegemonic discourse from the centre of disdain towards the periphery (see 6.10).

7.2 Counter-hegemonic language activism compared

The second main area of enquiry concerned the mobilisation and specific actions of counter-hegemonic language activists in Italy and Norway. It is possible to categorise activist engagement in language policy according to the mechanisms detailed by Shohamy (see 1.6 above).

In Italy, rules and regulations that exist to protect minority languages do not apply to some of what the Lega sees as languages, and the party has long tried to rectify this. The battles over the proposed definition of national language in the Italian Constitution (see 4.4.7) have also demonstrated how matters of language policy and national identification intersect. In Norway, on the other hand, specific pieces of legislation have been of great benefit to the Nynorsk and dialect campaigns. The legal parification of Bokmål and Nynorsk both as national languages and as languages of state administration has allowed Nynorsk activists to legitimate many of their demands.

In education, the provision for Norwegian pupils to be taught in their own spoken language (see 5.7) and the lack of a standardised spoken language at school have been essential both for the maintenance of dialect competence among younger generations and for the success of the 'dialect wave'. The Lega, meanwhile, has not been successful in introducing dialects to the school environment, apart from small-scale local projects and the Scuola Bosina (see 4.4.6).

Language tests, in the form of the *sidemål* exam (see 5.8 and 6.10), have also been important for Nynorsk activists, and a major bone of contention for neo-liberal politicians. This exam is intended to ensure that not only do there exist two written standard languages in Norway but also that everyone is capable of using both standards. All Norwegians should theoretically be able to participate in both linguistic cultures, preventing the sidelining of Nynorsk and holding together Norwegian society, if it can be seen as a consociational democracy. As has been shown, however, the intensity of the centre-dominated negative attitudes towards these exams is such that their long-term existence could be under threat.

Special attention has been devoted in this study to the use by language activists of linguistic landscape and propaganda materials (see especially 4.4.4, 4.4.5 and 6.12), which have only recently received significant attention from sociolinguists. More general place-name reforms (see 6.11) can also be considered in this category, as they will very often have a considerable impact on the linguistic landscape, and the links between toponymic attachment and the experience and contestation of the linguistic landscape would be a rewarding topic for future research. These mechanisms are of fundamental importance in language policy, and especially with reference to language activism. As with the dialect wave in Norway, it is through revolutions in praxis that wider hegemonic societal attitudes can be challenged, dismantled and reshaped. The appropriation of new spaces for dialects

and lesser-used languages, including in the linguistic landscape, achieves greater visibility of sociolinguistic diversity and is a fundamental step towards its greater recognition.

In the Lega's dialect road sign campaign, the party went from the role of objector, altering official Italian signs, to being the initiator of official dialect signage. Although the use of dialects on road signs contributes towards their protection and development on a par with minority languages, the political intentions of the Lega may mean that the signs serve more to publicise the Lega and its territorial claims. This has limited their acceptance by non-Lega voters. The linguistic landscape evidence from Norway underlines the pressure exerted by Bokmål, but there are indications of certain actors adopting Nynorsk visual identities, which are clearly appreciated by Nynorsk users (see figure 6.29).

The final category of language policy mechanisms covers ideologies, myths, propaganda and coercion. As has been shown throughout this study, ideologies are the most essential mechanism in language policy. Even non-users of a language can become heavily engaged in the development of language ideologies, often through the perpetuation of pervasive myths, such as 'Italian dialects are things of the past', 'Nynorsk is only based on western Norwegian dialects' or, perhaps most significantly from a Gramscian point of view, 'questions of national language were resolved in the nineteenth century, and we should accept the dominance of one national standard, normally based on the language of the centre'. These myths are frequently spread, even unconsciously, through propaganda such as the Italian media reaction to the minority languages bill in the early 1990s (see 4.3), and through coercion, including peer pressure, which is one reason why many early Nynorsk users convert to using Bokmål in adolescence or later life. When activists seek to influence such language ideologies, their actions will often be associated with other extra-linguistic ideologies, as will be discussed below.

7.3 Extra-linguistic ideologies and cultural cleavages

The third research question addressed the matter of the broader political values or ideologies that have become linked with language ideologies through activism and whether these alliances have been compatible with activists' linguistic aims.

There is, perhaps, a link between language and world-view (see 1.3-1.4 above), but the evidence presented through this research has shown that there is a much stronger bond between language activism and world-view. To become a language activist generally requires conscious and deliberate action, but in some cases such action may be implicit in using a given language: as using Nynorsk is not the default in Norway, for example, it tends to be a value-laden choice. Even if an individual learns to write Nynorsk first at school, there is significant pressure to conform to Bokmål, especially in certain domains.

Speaking dialect in Italy may not be quite out of the ordinary yet, but writing dialect may imply a degree of engagement in language maintenance. The Lega, however, is not an organic representation of dialect users; instead, it took advantage of dialect groups in order to begin its early growth period, and later to legitimise its nation-building project. Using dialect to write poetry, for example, does not yet carry strong associations with a Leghist viewpoint, but organised language activism has been coloured with a Padanian green brush, as evidenced by other dialect organisations having to openly declare their distance from the Lega (see 4.4.7). Also, although the Lega has campaigned on various dialect issues, its support for the linguistic diversity of Italy has been far from unwavering.

The Nynorsk movement came to reflect a pre-existing cultural cleavage in the conflict between centres and peripheries in Norway, and as a result soon managed to build alliances with political parties. Halvdan Koht, for example, saw analogies between the social aspects of the language struggle and the class struggle being waged by Arbeidarpartiet, and the party also saw an opportunity through the Samnorsk project to extend its electoral reach to

much broader sections of the Norwegian cleavage system, thereby also making the party and its ideologies more relevant to Norwegian society as a whole (see 5.9). The Samnorsk project and the social argumentation that lay behind it were strongly opposed by the conservative Riksmål movement and by the urban-dominated wartime Nazi regime. Meanwhile, the peripheral rural counter-cultures such as the Nynorsk movement seem to have acted, in the areas of Norway where they were strongest, as vaccines against the influence of Fascism (see 5.10). Although the Samnorsk project has since been abandoned as an official aim, the social inspiration of many of its proponents was adopted by the Nynorsk movement and acted as the driving force behind the dialect wave of the 1970s (see 6.7).

The Nynorsk movement fits neatly into Valen and Rokkan's 'model of the Norwegian cleavage system' (see figure 2.1), with proven correlations to other centre-opposed ideologies such as opposition to Norwegian membership of the EU, as well as evidence among Nynorsk users of particular voting patterns and value systems (see 6.9). The Nynorsk movement has a well established track record for standing up for the rights of the periphery or of the outsider, and this has become an increasingly prominent theme as Nynorsk has become progressively more geographically marginalised. Noregs Mållag is now looking to strengthen the position of Nynorsk in the 'core' Nynorsk municipalities (the 'core' of Nynorsk but the periphery of Norway), as the pressure from Bokmål is great even there.¹

The Lega is more difficult to place in a northern Italian cleavage system, where it supplanted previous political cleavages, mainly picking up voters from the old Catholic subculture who had moved away from that culture's solidarist values.² In as much as there is a linguistic cleavage in northern Italy, it does not correlate with Lega support. Nevertheless,

¹ Svein Gjerdåker, 'Mållaget satsar på kjerneområda', *Dag og Tid*, 2 May 2008, p. 10.

² Anna Cento Bull, *Social Identities and Political Cultures in Italy: Catholic, Communist and Leghist Communities between Civicness and Localism* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2000), p. 214.

the Lega has consistently portrayed the North as a peripheral area under attack by the hegemony of the centre, or sometimes as an oppressed colonised nation. The Lega has, for instance, organised a Padanian 'national' football team, managed by Umberto Bossi's son, which takes part in the VIVA World Cup. With this, the Lega has attempted to draw comparisons between Padania and the other nations represented, such as Sápmi and Iraqi Kurdistan. Padania has won three out of the four tournaments held to date.

The portrayal of northern Italy as a periphery is in contradiction to the evidence that points towards the relative centrality of northern Italy within Italian and European power structures, especially when it comes to industry and communications, but increasingly also in terms of political power (see 2.3.1 and 4.4). Furthermore, according to Pasolini (see 4.1), the majority language of northern Italy – northern regional Italian – is the main constituent of the modern Italian language, so today the North can even be seen as a linguistic centre. Apart from the contradiction in claiming that Lombardy is a periphery – at most, in territorial terms it could be considered an 'interface periphery', with certain peripheral areas within the region itself – the other base values of the Lega are quite different from the prevailing values in the Nynorsk movement. For many who may not otherwise be opposed to dialects, their promotion by the Lega is seen as part of a climate of intolerance towards non-dialect speakers, who form an out-group.

7.4 Counter-hegemony and linguistic democracy

Benedict Anderson claimed that 'language is not an instrument of exclusion', because 'in principle anyone can learn any language'.³ In light of the Lega's use of dialects to construct the notion of Padania, contrived to exclude certain groups, perhaps it is necessary to revisit

³ Anderson, p. 134.

this idea: languages are not necessarily instruments of exclusion, but it is possible to use them with intent to exclude. Indeed, it is possible to learn northern dialects, but the paucity of opportunities to do so makes this impractical for most migrants in northern Italy. As a result of the Lega's prolonged campaigns, there is a danger that the use of dialects in certain domains, particularly in official use, will become exclusively associated with that political movement. This association will continue to limit acceptance of initiatives for greater official support for dialects and may have a negative long-term effect on language beliefs and attitudes.

The model and findings of this study could be meaningfully applied to other contexts, exploring the situations of dialects or minority languages elsewhere and leading to further insights into the Italian and Norwegian situations. The limited acceptance of official dialect use in northern Italy is put into perspective when compared with the case of neighbouring Switzerland. Just across the border from Lombardy, in the Italoophone Swiss canton Ticino, a number of places have monolingual dialect street names, but this has not generated the same controversies seen in northern Italy. Switzerland does have four national languages, so multilingualism is not perceived as a threat to national integrity but instead as a key element of national identity. The Ticinese municipality of Monte Carasso, for example, has entirely monolingual official dialect street-names, and the name changes were agreed unanimously by local councillors, which would be highly unusual over the border in Lombardy.⁴ The more relaxed attitude towards the political connotations of dialect in Italian-speaking Switzerland is reflected in the comments of a Ticinese dialect columnist on the controversial diffusion of dialect road signs in Lombardy. The article mentions that the matter crops up now and then '*come ul mostro da Lochness* [sic]' ('like the Loch Ness Monster'), and continues:

⁴ Puzey, 'Opportunity or Threat?', p. 824.

[...] ul fantasma dal cartell in dialètt al gira par la Lombardia [...].
 Va piasaress Lugano-Lügan, Chiasso-Ciass, Mendrisio-Mendris?
 [...] Scriv in dialètt l'è 'protocollare, burocratico, una esibizione un
 po' sfacciata (e sgradevole) di potere', al ma dis ammò ul Giorgio
 De Rienzo. Se capissom ben, in dal senso che ul dialètt al finiss par
 esclüd, par tàia föra, qui che parla different (mia domà italian, ma
 tütt l'ambaradan di espression linguistic oramai rivàt denta in dal
 territori). L'è vera, l'è mia vera? Mah! Guardii pö voialtri. E fimm
 savé.⁵

[...] the spectre of dialect road signs is spreading in Lombardy [...].
 How would you like Lugano-Lügan, Chiasso-Ciass, Mendrisio-
 Mendris? [...] Writing in dialect is 'formal, bureaucratic, a quite
 blatant (and unpleasant) display of power', [Italian literature
 professor] Giorgio De Rienzo tells me further. If I have understood
 correctly, in the sense that dialect ends up excluding, cutting off
 those who speak differently (not just Italian, but the whole
 mishmash of linguistic expressions that have now come into the
 territory). Is it true or isn't it? Who knows! You can make up your
 own minds. And let me know.

Parallels can also be drawn between Switzerland and Norway, and indeed Peter
 Trudgill has pointed out that both countries have open attitudes to the use of dialects and
 both are highly economically successful, which suggests that the use of dialect is not a
 hindrance in economic terms.⁶ He also suggests that Norway's 'liberal, egalitarian, non-
 hierarchical, and non-centralising character' is reflected in language attitudes.⁷ Even though
 Norway is exceptionally democratic in its respect for dialects, as has been borne out in this
 study, some language users are more equal than others in Norway too, namely those whose
 internalised speech is closest to written moderate Bokmål, and whose speech is therefore less
 marked than that of others. Some dialects are also seen more favourably than others.⁸

⁵ Pier Baron, 'Gh'è sü Bèrghem e Varés, Lügan al va piasaress?', *Illustrazione ticinese*, March 2009, p. 10.

⁶ Peter Trudgill, 'Foreword: Dialects and Democracy', in *An Introduction to Norwegian Dialects*, ed. by Olaf Husby et al. (Trondheim: Tapir Academic Press, 2008), pp. 9-11.

⁷ Ibid., p. 10.

⁸ Bull, 'Norsk i Norge', p. 201.

Although the Norwegian situation is not perfect, one of the most unusual and democratic traits of Norwegian language management is the considerable prominence that peripheral rural dialects and working-class urban sociolects have had as models for standardisation, especially through the influence of the Samnorsk project. In most other countries, these varieties in particular would be seen as 'low'-status. This exceptionally democratic and inclusive approach is the result of what, in Gramscian terms, could be called an organic approach to language policy, a route to greater linguistic democracy by respecting the peripheries that has generally been lacking from language management elsewhere, not only in Italy. A synthesis of this approach, as it has been identified in the present study, will form the final section of this conclusion.

7.5 Organic language policy and respect for the peripheries

Gramsci criticised Manzoni and Esperantists for favouring constructed, undemocratic languages (see 3.5.2 above). Referring to the molecular processes in the development of national languages, such as the mechanisms that have been explored in this investigation, Gramsci underlined the necessity of a complete and historicist view of the national language situation in order to 'intervene' successfully in the language question. He saw that such a long-term 'rational' approach to language management would ensure that the language would be '*organicamente legata alla tradizione, ciò che non è di poca importanza nell'economia della cultura*' ('organically tied to tradition, which is of no small importance in the economy of culture').⁹ Nynorsk was different to Manzoni's project or to Esperanto because it reflected a pre-existing cultural cleavage, and a massive popular movement grew up around it. Aasen's

⁹ Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, III, pp. 2345-2346.

was a historicist language as it was based on Norwegian dialects that had not gone out of use, but were merely not written.

The Norwegian standard written languages are perhaps uniquely 'organically tied to tradition'. The Italian national language, on the other hand, is also certainly 'tied to tradition', albeit through a much less organic process. Gramsci also cautioned, however, that the process of linguistic unification must not be seen as finished when intervention has first taken place. Although Nynorsk, like Esperanto, was originally codified by one man, it has been continually reformed since then and currently allows for so much variation that it is now, arguably, equally the product of linguistic developments in Norway over the past century and a half as it was the product of the Norwegian dialects at the time Aasen devised the standard. Bokmål has also been reformed in the direction of the language of the people (see 5.9), which has made that standard more organic too. The reason for these continuing reforms is the healthy durability of the language debate in Norway, which raises interest and awareness in language among the population.

If a society requires a standard language, it is in society's interests that this language is organically rooted in tradition and as representative as possible of the spontaneous spoken language. The cases of Nynorsk and the more radical forms of Bokmål, especially when considered with the spelling reforms of the Samnorsk era, reveal standard languages that are not only 'organically tied to tradition', but that are also organically tied to a wide range of dialects and sociolects, showing considerable respect for the political, territorial and cultural peripheries of Norwegian society, most often overlooked in standard languages in favour of the linguistic varieties of the centre.

The organic link between dialects and standard language in Norway and the continued existence of both official standards of Norwegian create a certain cultural covenant between language users, language activists and language managers. Nevertheless,

the persistence of centuries-old power structures means that, even in linguistically democratic Norway, linguistic discrimination, or linguicism (see 2.4) still exists, but this can be combated through a continued and consistent promotion of linguistic diversity using all the mechanisms of language policy, including the often neglected areas of language in public space and ideology. Effective opposition to linguistic discrimination of all sorts can be extremely beneficial for the self-confidence of language users, and language activists are essential to this aim. By continuing their linguistic wars of position, they may resolve much more than just language questions.

While the Lega Nord practices a form of nationalism that is openly exclusionist, the Nynorsk movement's brand of nationalism tends to be inclusive and, most recently, intended as a bulwark against globalisation. All the same, it is necessary to exercise caution when using nationalist argumentation of any sort, as the founders of the Italian Constitution may have felt, if the omission of any reference to Italian as the official national language was actually intentional (see 4.4.7). More than the nation, however, language serves society and social interaction. The cultivation, protection and promotion of linguistic diversity are therefore among the greatest responsibilities of society. Organically rooted language policy facilitates better personal and social communication and, by increasing self-confidence among speakers and deconstructing linguistic prejudices, it has the potential to create a more inclusive and cohesive society while also maintaining linguistic and cultural diversity.

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